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The theological works of the

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THE  
THEOLOGICAL WORKS

OF

THE MOST REVEREND

✓  
JOHN SHARP, D.D.

LATE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

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A NEW EDITION, IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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VOL. V.

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TO  
THE READER.

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IN the preface to the two volumes of Archbishop Sharp's Works, which were lately printed, mention is made of a small reserve of discourses in the popish controversy, which might possibly some time or other be published, with other of his papers relating to that controversy.

When that preface was wrote, the editor had not determined with himself whether this collection should ever come abroad or no. Much less had he any apprehensions that he should, in so short a time, commit it to the press; for he looked upon that dispute as out of vogue, and little attended to; and also considered that the writings of the protestant divines in the reigns of king Charles and king James II. were very numerous as well as excellent; and therefore that these discourses (though properly enough a part of the popish controversy) would seem superfluous and unseasonable. And under these reasons he was disposed to acquiesce, had not the late attempts of the Roman catholics in and about London given occasion to revive the neglected dispute, and to put men upon a review of the subjects in debate between the church of England and the church of Rome. This he thought a seasonable juncture for bringing to light the following treatises, which have been suppressed above fifty years, and perhaps might always have continued so,

if some such reason as this had not accidentally offered itself to usher them into the world.

They are all, or most of them, designedly calculated for the use of the unlearned protestant. The author of them had the care of one of the largest parishes in London, during the whole time the late popish controversy was on foot. He was perfectly well acquainted with the subtilties of the popish divines, and knew by abundant experience among his own parishioners, what were the principal difficulties that the inferior sort laboured under, from the fallacious and insidious persuasions and insinuations of those who strove to pervert them. What he wrote therefore, and is now published, was purposely contrived as a present antidote to the mischiefs attempted among his flock. For which reason he entered as little as possible upon the learned or historical part of the controversy, (as will be observed, though he was very capable of discharging that part of it with success,) but confined himself chiefly to those points which were more immediately necessary to guard the weak from the sophistry of the Jesuits, and to relieve and deliver the unwary, who were already entangled in their snares.

With this view he hath formed his arguments so plain, and made his chain of reasoning upon them so natural and so familiar, that they appear to be adapted to the taste as well as the capacities of ordinary Christians. Something there is likewise to the taste of the party he opposes; such of them at least as have any taste of beauty and excellence in writing upon controverted points; viz. the calmness and temper wherewith he engages them, and the special care he always takes never to calumniate or

misrepresent them. He was wont to say himself, that in his sermons against the papists he had always dealt honestly and fairly with them, charging them with nothing but what their church openly avowed in her creed and councils and public offices. Which candour of temper and equity of conduct, in any controversy, though it be not always the readiest means of working upon the vulgar, yet cannot fail of having a great influence upon all serious and well-meaning people.

He was often pressed by his friends to print these discourses himself; but he declined it. When he was solicited to do so about the time of the revolution, or soon after it, he gave for an answer, that the danger was then over, and the design of them was superseded; and that to publish them at that time would only look like making his court.

And it doth not appear that at any time afterwards he regarded them, or meddled with them, further than to correct and transcribe one or two of them which he preached at York, in order to check some attempts that the popish priests were suspected and reported to have made in that neighbourhood. One of these was that remarkable sermon which, upon the first delivery of it in his parish church at London, in 1686, had drawn upon him the displeasure of king James and his court, and had given occasion to the order that was sent to Dr. Compton, then bishop of London, to suspend him, which brought on the troubles of that prelate from the ecclesiastical commission. But whereas, in his transcript of this discourse, upon the revisal of it, that passage which was supposed to be most offensive and obnoxious, was entirely left out, (as



being a particular answer to a certain argument that had been slipped into his hand in St. Giles's church, as he supposed, by way of challenge, and which therefore could not pertinently be repeated when he preached the same sermon above twenty years after at his own cathedral,) therefore recourse was had for that passage to the first or original copy. And whereas the other differences between the two copies did not appear to be material, but to consist rather in correction of expressions and style, than of the matter or arguments, it was judged most advisable to follow the first copy altogether in this edition<sup>a</sup>; both for the satisfaction of the reader, whose curiosity would be better gratified with a true and faithful representation of the very same sermon that produced the effects above mentioned; and also to vindicate the author of it from the unjust reflections of Father Orleans upon it, who knowing nothing of the contents of it, charged it arbitrarily and upon hearsay; and likewise (for that was another consideration worth regarding) to make it of a piece with all the rest, which are now published from the first hand, and without emendation of any kind, since the time they were preached in St. Giles's pulpit: with this only exception, that what were two sermons upon 2 Pet. iii. 16. appear now only as one. And whereas the sermon upon Auricular Confession was connected with others upon the same text, which were lately printed in the fifth

<sup>a</sup> Sermon VI. a discussion of the question which the Roman catholics most insist upon with the protestants, viz. in which of the different communions in Christendom the only true church of Christ is to be found. With a refutation of a certain popish argument handed about in MS. anno 1686.

volume<sup>a</sup> under the title of Confession of Sins necessary to Repentance, it became unavoidable both there and here to omit as much as served only to shew the connection between them, and which therefore could have no place in their present state of separation.

These were liberties which Dr. Barker owns he made no scruple of taking with the posthumous sermons of archbishop Tillotson, whose authority he also pleads for doing so. The editor hopes he may be indulged in the same liberty, having never used it but when he judged it necessary, and even then without altering the sense, and with as little change to the words as possible.

And now the reader has all before him that is requisite for his information concerning these Sermons. If he shall not find them so finished and correct as those already printed, he will know where to ascribe the defect. An imputation of rashness in the publisher of them, grounded on this reason only, will not much affect him, provided his sole aim in the publication be answered, which is the preserving some people, into whose hands they may fall, from the errors of popery, and establishing them more firmly in the communion of the Church of England. Once they contributed very much to this good end; and it is not unreasonable to expect they may do so again. And as it is certain that Dr. Sharp owed to them much of his reputation in the last age, so it is presumed they may be received with some degree of approbation in the present; at least it is hoped, that what tended so eminently to advance his credit then, will not turn to the disadvantage of

<sup>a</sup> See vol. iv. pp. 152—178 of this edition.

his memory now. The closing the collection of his works with his earliest performances is not unprecedented, neither can it seem improper to conclude his remains with those pieces which first served to raise his character in the world.

As concerning the papers subjoined in the Appendix, their relation to the subject of the sermons to which they are annexed must speak their propriety. The first is a reply to a letter from a gentlewoman who had lately fallen into the hands of Dr. Cross, (a Jesuit, author of the Contemplations of the Virgin, and of some other popish books.) Mrs. Kingesmill's letter is printed from the original, and the answer from a copy of it of Dr. Sharp's own writing, as all the other papers that follow are likewise found under his own hand. They may have their use; at least, as there are but few of them, the publication of them at this time will deserve no censure.

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# A S E R M O N

ON

1 PETER III. 15.

— *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

**T**HE *hope* that is here said to be in Christians, and of which they are to be ready to give an account, is without doubt nothing else but that faith, or that doctrine, or that religion which the Christians do profess, and upon which their hope of another life is grounded. In this figurative sense is the word used in other places of scripture, particularly in the twenty-sixth of Acts, ver. 6, where the *hope* for which St. Paul is accused of the Jews, is plainly the Christian doctrine, and particularly that part of it which concerned the resurrection of the dead.

This then is the plain meaning of the precept in my text; That all Christians should so far inquire into the grounds of that religion which they profess, and upon which they bottom their hopes, as to be ready and prepared at any time (when they are called upon to do it) to give a reasonable account of it; such an account as may satisfy any unprejudiced mind that they act like rational men in believing and professing as they do: *Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*; that is, Be prepared and instructed at all times to give a satisfactory account

of your faith and religion to all such as shall at any time call in question the reasonableness of it.

This being the sense of the text, two points, very necessary in these times<sup>a</sup>, we may observe from it.

First of all, that faith and reason are not inconsistent one with another, but may well stand together. Whatever we are obliged to believe in matters of religion, we are by this precept obliged to be able to give a reason for; or to give an account of the reasonableness of that belief. And therefore certainly we are not obliged to believe any thing that is unreasonable, or that we cannot give a reason for our believing it.

The second point to be observed from hence is, That it is not enough that our faith, or hope, or religion be reasonable in itself, but it is the duty of every professor of that faith so to satisfy himself of the reasonableness of it, as to be able to answer them that ask a reason for it. And therefore every man not only may, but ought to inquire into his religion, and not so to rely on the authority and judgment of other men, as to swallow, without examination, every thing that they propose to him.

These two points are plainly contained in the text, and accordingly I shall make them the heads of my Discourse upon it.

I. The first point is this; That reason and faith are not inconsistent: or this; The religion we profess is no unreasonable thing. On the contrary, in all the parts of it, it is such as recommends itself to the reason of mankind; in all the parts of it, it is such as we may be able to give a reason for.

The not attending to this point hath done much

<sup>a</sup> Preached in 1687.

mischief to religion ; for it hath been the occasion that many absurd doctrines have been introduced into it, which perchance, if this proposition had been considered, would never have found entertainment in the world. They have done no kindness at all to our religion, but rather a great deal of disservice to it, who have made faith and reason two things opposite one to the other ; maintaining this absurd position, that our reason was so much of a different nature from our faith, that it ought never to be consulted, much less to be heard when faith was concerned : nay, any thing that was proposed to us as a matter of faith, was so much the more to be believed because it was contrary to our reason. And if we can once attain to that pitch of virtue, as strongly to believe things impossible in human reason, our faith was therein much the more glorious, and should be much better rewarded.

This notion may indeed do great service to the cause of the church of Rome, but how it will serve any purposes of the gospel of Christ no considering man will be able to see.

My design at this time is to confute and expose this absurd position, and to shew the necessary dependance that faith hath upon reason ; but withal, the great improvement that reason receives from faith. To shew that they are not inconsistent things, but have an entire agreement one with another ; nay, so closely are they linked, that if we reject either one or the other, or advance one to the prejudice of the other, we cannot avoid the running into dangerous errors and inconveniences.

The proposition we have before us is this : That reason and faith are not contradictory things ; or

this; That the religion which is of God, and which it is our duty to believe, doth not in any one part or article of it do violence to our reason.

For the making out this, I lay down these following propositions :

1. First of all, That nothing that is proposed to us to be believed as a matter of faith, or an article of religion, is further to be entertained by us than we have a reason to convince us of the truth of it.

2. Secondly, That we have no other way to judge, or to be convinced of the truth of any matter of faith, or article of our religion, but the agreeableness of it with the principles of our natural reason.

3. Thirdly, Whatever therefore is plainly and apparently repugnant to and inconsistent with the principles of natural reason cannot be true; and therefore ought not to be believed by us as an article of religion or a matter of faith.

4. Fourthly, That notwithstanding, there may be many things in religion highly reasonable to be believed, which yet natural reason could not discover, nor after they are discovered can it fully comprehend. There may be reason enough to convince us of the truth of them, though we have not our reason so perfect as to be able to see perfectly through them, or to answer all the difficulties that may be raised against them.

The clearing these four propositions will not only fully explain and prove our main point, but also obviate all the difficulties and objections that are usually raised in this controversy. I shall therefore speak to them in order.

1. The first proposition is this; That nothing that is proposed to us to be believed as a matter of faith,

or an article of religion, is further to be entertained by us, than we have reason given us for the truth of it.

This, I think, is so universally acknowledged by all mankind, of what persuasion or religion soever they be, that it would be a needless thing to attempt the proof of it. There is no man in the world ever endeavoured to draw another man to his own opinion, but he would offer him reasons why he should embrace that opinion rather than the contrary. And there is no man ever took up any opinion or persuasion, either in religion or in other things, but he either had reason, or thought he had reason, to incline and determine him to it. A man cannot believe as he pleaseth: how desirous soever he may be that this or the other thing should be true, yet he cannot bring his mind to assent to it, unless he have some reason, or something that looks like a reason, that inclines him to it. Whatever power the *will* of man hath to determine itself, yet it is certain the *understanding* must always go according to the evidence that is given in to it. It implies a contradiction, that a man should believe a proposition any further than he is convinced of the truth of it. And how can he be convinced of the truth of it further than he is satisfied that there are solid and strong reasons to persuade him unto it? But to speak more words upon this is to add light to the sun.

2. I therefore proceed. The next proposition we lay down is this; That we have no other measure to judge of the truth of any religion, than the agreeableness of it with the principles of our natural reason.

For the proof of this, if it need any, the former

proposition hath laid a sufficient foundation. We ought not, nay, we cannot believe any thing further than there is reason given us for the truth of it. When therefore any thing is proposed to our belief, it is certain we must examine whether there be reason sufficient to persuade us to believe it. Now how can we examine this otherwise than by comparing the thing in question with some rules or principles of our own minds, by which we use to search out the truth or falsehood of things? If the point recommended to our belief be agreeable to them, we judge it true; if otherwise, we are to conclude it false. This is the way of proceeding of all mankind, when they deliberate concerning a proposition, whether it be true or false.

Well then, some fixed, certain rules and principles we must have in ourselves, with which we are to compare, and by which we are to judge of the truth or falsehood of things recommended to us. Now the only remaining question is, what those rules and principles are? But indeed it is no question at all; for what other can be assigned besides our natural reason? that is to say, our understandings acting according to those notions that are either connatural with it, or collected from our senses. These are the principles by which we are to judge of all things in the world that are not self-evident, that is to say, that need any proof to recommend them to our belief; and the comparing things with these principles, and making conclusions from such comparisons, is that which we call *reason*.

Now it is certain, there is no man in the world can assign any other sure way of distinguishing truth from falsehood but this. And it is certain, that every man in the world, in all other things that do most



nearly concern him, doth always make his judgment by this rule and measure. And if in all other things, why not in matters of religion? What pretence, what colour is there that religion only should be exempted from the tribunal of reason, to which all men's other concernments are confessedly subject? If indeed religion was a thing designed to destroy and take away our natures; if it was one thing to be a man, and another thing to be religious, there would be some colour for this: but there is no such thing. God in obliging us to religion considers us as men: he doth not thereby intend to destroy our human natures, but to improve them. Now, if in matters of religion we must be supposed to be dealt with as men, it is certain we can have no principles to judge of religion by, but only those common principles of reason which are planted in all the men in the world, and which constitute their natures, and distinguish them from brutes, and by which they are governed in all their human actions.

If any man reply to this, that in things of religion we are to be guided by divine revelation, and not by reason; forasmuch as reason is utterly unable to direct us in the things of God; we readily and heartily grant it: but this makes nothing against what I have now laid down. For this is that we say; we are to judge of that revelation, whether it be from God or no, whether it be a divine revelation or an imposture; I say, we are to judge of this by the principles of our reason. It is acknowledged by us as a certain thing, that after we are once convinced that God hath made a revelation of his will in any point, we are without more ado to believe it, and steadfastly to adhere to it. And there is the greatest reason in



the world that we should so do : for it is one of the first principles of reason that God cannot deceive others, nor be deceived himself; and therefore whatever he saith must be true. But then the matter in doubt is, how shall we be satisfied that God hath made such a revelation? must we take every doctrine for a divine revelation that any one doth confidently affirm to be from God? If so, then we shall never be secure from being imposed upon, and we shall have every day doctrines obtruded upon us for divine truth, which are utterly inconsistent with and contradictory to one another. On the other side, if we must not take every thing for a revelation from God that pretends to be so, then there is a necessity we should examine whether that which comes recommended to us as such doth really deserve that name. But what rules or measures can we examine this by, but the principles of our natural, inbred senses and reason; those principles of truth which God hath implanted in our natures antecedently to all positive revelations of his will?

If any man will not be content with this, but will object further in this matter, that we are not to judge of God's revelations by reason, but by the Spirit; in order to the making an answer to this, all that we desire to know is, what they who thus affirm do mean by *the Spirit*? If by *the Spirit* they mean only the assistance of the Holy Spirit given to well-disposed persons for the removing of their prejudices and sinful lusts, that may hinder them from embracing the truth, and the better enabling them to make use of their reason and discerning faculties in the searching and finding out the truth, we grant what they say. We do believe that the Spirit of

God doth thus concur with every good man to the working faith in him, or the making him a believer. But if by *the Spirit*, which they say is to judge of the things pertaining to God and religion, they mean a principle in a man that hath no agreement or communication with that other principle of his nature which we call *reason*, but is a thing put in opposition and contradiction to that, then we utterly deny what they affirm. We say, that such a spirit ought not to have any influence upon our understandings, or to be any rule or measure of our belief. For at this rate we could never have any fixed rule to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood, and every imposture of the Devil's might pass with us for the dictate of the Spirit of God; and we could no way help it: in a word, we had no way to *try spirits*, but must believe every spirit pretending to come from God: which is expressly contrary to the apostle's command, who bids us *not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God* or no, 1 John iv. 1. How much soever therefore the Spirit of God doth influence us in order to the making us believers, this doth not in the least hinder but that we are to try and examine the spirits; that is, to use our utmost skill and endeavour to find out whether that Spirit that would persuade us to the belief of such and such doctrines be really from God or no. And what rule have we *to try the spirits* by, but the principles of reason which is planted in our natures: that is to say, our senses, and our common notions, and the dictates of that natural religion which every man is born with. By the agreement or disagreement of any doctrine proposed to those principles,

we only can certainly know whether the revelation that propounds that doctrine be from God or no.

And thus much let it suffice to have spoken of our second position.

3. The third assertion is this : That whatever is propounded to us in matters of religion, if it do plainly and evidently contradict the principles of natural reason, and be repugnant thereto, we ought not to believe it as coming from God, because it cannot be true.

I put in these terms of *plainly* and *evidently*, because several points there may be of that nature, that they may seemingly clash with reason, though they do not ; and may seem to contradict sense, which yet do not. And so ill judges are some men, both of sense and reason, that they may reject a point as inconsistent with both, which yet to all the wiser sort of men will appear highly agreeable to them. But whatever is plainly and evidently repugnant to the common sense of mankind, that is to say, contradicts those principles by which all men distinguish between truth and falsehood, and in such things and objects where sense and reason have a fair scope to exercise themselves ; I say, whatever in this case is repugnant to those principles, ought not to be admitted by us as a truth of God, nor consequently ought it to obtain our belief.

For if we are to judge of the truth of divine revelations by the principles of our reason, then certainly whatever is contained in any revelation which pretends to be divine that is evidently contradictory to those principles, that very thing ought to be a just and sufficient argument to make us reject that revelation as to that point ; for it is certain that

truth cannot be contrary to truth. But now we suppose that our reason and common notions and senses are all true, and to be relied upon ; otherwise they would be no rules for us to measure and judge of other things by. Whatever therefore doth contradict them cannot be true, and consequently cannot be supposed to come from God.

But some may say, May not God reveal something to mankind in religion, and oblige them to believe it, which is contrary to reason? I answer, He can no more be supposed to do this, than he can be supposed to deny himself. For those natural notices we have for the distinguishing of truth and falsehood of things that are represented to us are from him ; they are the image of his own mind impressed upon our souls ; and therefore, whatever doth not agree with these faithful copies cannot possibly agree with the original. If we once be brought to believe that God's revelations in any part of them do contradict the common principles of reason implanted in our nature, we must of necessity at the same time believe that God can do and undo at the same time ; that he doth at pleasure so alter the nature of things, that that which was true yesterday is not true to day, and that which is now true, and acknowledged to be true by us, (because we have the best evidence in the world for the truth of it,) shall, upon a new revelation that he may make, cease to be true to-morrow. Which position if it do not destroy all truth and all morality, I do not know what doth.

The use I make of this point is this : that when any person endeavours to persuade us to the belief of any point, we should in the first place satisfy ourselves that the point is not repugnant to our reason

or our senses. If it be, we ought not by any means to give ear to it; nay, by this very thing we may certainly know, that the man that would persuade us is either an impostor himself, or imposed upon, since he teacheth that for a divine truth which is a perfect falsehood.

As for instance: If any man will endeavour to draw me over to the belief of the doctrine of transubstantiation; that is to say, to believe that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper that which appears to me to be bread and wine is not really bread and wine, but the very body and blood of Christ that was broken and shed sixteen hundred years ago, and is now (as all Christians agree) at the right hand of God in heaven; I ought not to believe him in this, be he otherwise never so credible a person, because it contradicts my own reason and my senses. And though for my conviction he quotes a thousand times the words of our Saviour, who said, *This is my body*, and, *This is my blood*, yet I must say, that our Saviour could not mean these words in the sense that he means them; for if he did understand them in that sense, he must in effect tell me I am not to believe my own eyes, nor my own taste, nor my own feeling, in a plain matter of sense, nor my own reason in a thing that is as obvious as any thing in the world.

Again; If a man will preach to me that for the cause of religion it is lawful for a bishop to depose and murder sovereign princes; that I may take oaths of fidelity to the government, and yet break them upon a dispensation from the vicar of Christ; that I may affirm or deny any thing before an heretical magistrate, though it be with the solemnity of venturing



my salvation upon it, by swearing upon the Gospels ; that I am not to keep faith with man so long as I have a secret reservation in my mind, and am privileged thereto by the license of my spiritual guide ; I say, whoever would impose upon me in such things as these, ought, without any other dispute, to be rejected by me as a cheat. For what he would persuade me to is contrary to the natural notions of religion and justice and honesty that are implanted in my mind. And if he pretend any revelation from scripture for these things, I may certainly deny it, because no revelation, no scripture of God, can allow of such things ; they being contrary to the principles of natural religion ; that is, that natural reason I have concerning religion, upon the credit of which I am to believe and receive all scripture and revelations.

Again ; If any one would convince me that I ought to worship the blessed Virgin or any other saint, and assure me that several miracles have been wrought for the confirmation of this point ; why here I must also refuse my assent upon the same account. If a thousand miracles had been performed (as are told us) by the images of the Virgin or other saints, yet if God hath long before declared that we are to worship none but himself with divine worship, and if that declaration of his has been confirmed by an infinite number of undoubted miracles in old time, both of Moses and the prophets, and Christ, and his apostles ; all the new miracles they tell us of ought to signify nothing to us. For God having once declared his will, and attested that declaration by many uncontrollable, unexceptionable miracles, that is to be our standing, perpetual rule to walk by: and whatever miracles are opposed thereto

in these latter times ought not to be regarded by us ; but we are to look upon them either as the delusions of the Devil, or the figments and impostures of designing men. For it is an eternal and unalterable principle of reason, that what God hath once made a law to mankind, and hath declared likewise that he will never alter that law, or put a new one in the place of it ; that law shall always bind, whatever pretences of new credentials or attestations from Heaven be made use of to make us believe that it is repealed or dispensed with.

Lastly, If any man will be insinuating that the scripture is now out of doors, as being a dead letter, and that it is the Spirit that is to guide us all ; that the sacraments of Christianity and the historical matters of our faith concerning Jesus Christ's birth, life, and sufferings, are all to be interpreted in a mystical, spiritual sense ; which sense we are to have from the inspiration of the spirit that witnesseth within us ; such a man as this I ought to abandon as a false prophet, as one that opposeth my sense and reason, and sets up a private spirit against the reason of mankind and the revelation of Jesus Christ, once publicly attested to the satisfaction and conviction of the world.

4. And thus much of my third point ; I now proceed to my last proposition : That, notwithstanding what we have said, there may be many things in religion highly reasonable to be believed, which yet natural reason could not discover ; nor after they are discovered can it fully comprehend. Though we do affirm that God doth never oblige us to believe any thing contrary or repugnant to reason ; yet at the same time we do heartily acknowledge that he



hath obliged us to believe several things which cannot be demonstrated by reason; nay, and some things which reason cannot so perfectly fathom as to master all the difficulties of them. But yet for all that, there is infinite reason that we should believe these things; and in the belief of them, we proceed upon those very foundations of common sense and reason that we have all this while been establishing.

For instance; it cannot be demonstrated by reason, that God should send his son Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind; much less that he should expose him to a cruel death, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Nor can it be proved by reason, that this Jesus, that died for us, must at the end of the world come again visibly in person to judge the quick and the dead; and that then all men that have ever died shall be raised; that is to say, they shall have bodies united to their souls, so as to find themselves perfectly the same persons which they were in this world; (which is that which we call *the resurrection*;) I say, reason could not have found out any of these things. The most sagacious and contemplative man upon earth could never have discovered this method of God's proceeding with mankind. Or if he should have happened on some thoughts or fancies about some of these points, yet he could never, by solid arguments, have proved them to be certain truths: because they altogether depended upon the pleasure of God. So that these things we are to believe perfectly upon the authority of divine revelation. We therefore know them to be true, because God hath told us that they are so: but then, after God hath revealed these doctrines to us by his son Jesus Christ and his apostles, they do

appear so highly reasonable in themselves, and so every way suitable to the goodness and justice and wisdom of God, that any man's reason, if it be sincere and pure and unprejudiced, cannot but heartily close with them, and assent to them, as soon as ever they are fairly proposed with the evidence that attends them.

Nor is there any objection to be made against them, either in point of possibility, or in point of reasonableness, or in point of evidence, but what any considering man can easily quit himself of.

But then, there is another sort of doctrines which our Christianity obliges us to believe, which are more mysterious ; that is to say, do not lie so plain and obvious to our reason, even after they are revealed to us, as the former do. But so much are they above the capacity of our short understandings, that we must believe them without being able to have a full and adequate comprehension of them. And such are these two articles of our religion, the doctrine of the Incarnation and the doctrine of the Trinity. Not that these doctrines are unintelligible, or that we cannot form a consistent notion of them, for it is certainly otherwise; we may truly understand, and form a consistent notion of both these points: but this is the thing, by reason of the infinity of the object that is here presented to us, and the shallowness of our finite understandings that are to consider them, we must of necessity fall short of seeing so clearly through these points, as not to be entangled with great difficulties when we would overcuriously pry into them. But then, all this may well consist with what we have been asserting. Notwithstanding this, we do in no wise act contrary to

reason or sense, in giving assent to those doctrines, how much above our reason soever they be. We are still *able to give an answer to every one that shall ask us a reason of the faith that is in us*, even as to these two sublime mysteries. There is nothing in them contrary to our common sense and reason, and so it is possible they may be true. God Almighty (and that we can prove) hath actually revealed and taught them by his Son: and so we are certain they are true. Here is sufficient satisfaction for our reason, and here is sufficient evidence for our faith. All that we have here to do, is to examine whether Jesus Christ and his apostles have taught these doctrines: and when we are convinced of that, to believe them heartily, to profess them constantly, to worship God according to the discoveries he hath made of his nature, and to acquiesce in these revelations without troubling ourselves or others with nice questions and speculations about them.

But yet here it is that we are nowadays briskly attacked by the patrons of that doctrine which I touched upon under my last head. Rather than we shall not believe transubstantiation, they would have us call in question the Trinity and Christ's Incarnation. For, say they, you have the same evidence in scripture for the one doctrine that you have for the other; and as for the point of reason, the one is every whit involved with as many difficulties and absurdities as the other is pretended to be: why therefore should you not equally believe both?

I have not now time to answer this argument as it deserves to be answered. Only I leave with you these three differences between the two doctrines,

transubstantiation on the one hand, and the Trinity and Incarnation on the other.

The first is, that there is not the same evidence in the word of God for the one that there is for the other; the former being nowhere evidently taught there, no, nor thought to be taught there by the Christians of the first ages; the latter being plainly delivered by Christ and his apostles, as the very foundation of Christianity, and the faith into which all believers were to be baptized.

The second difference is, that transubstantiation is plainly about a matter that falls under the cognizance of our senses and reason. But the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation have an infinite God for their object, to whose nature neither our senses nor our reason is any ways adequate or commensurate.

The third difference is, that there are manifest absurdities and contradictions in the one doctrine, but none at all in the other two. Though they be above our reason, yet they are not contrary to it.

But I may speak more of these things and of this text hereafter. In the mean time consider what you have heard, and God give you understanding in all things.

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N. B. See these three last points of difference enlarged upon, in the latter end of the second sermon against transubstantiation.

# A SERMON

ON

1 PETER III. 15.

— *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

**T**WO general points I laid down to insist upon from this text.

First, That faith and reason are not inconsistent one with another, but may well stand together. If we be obliged to be able to give an account of the reasonableness of our faith, (which is the same thing which is here called *hope*,) then certainly we are not obliged to believe any thing which is unreasonable, or that we cannot give a reason for believing it.

Secondly, That it is not enough that our faith or religion be reasonable in itself, but it is the duty of every professor of that faith so to satisfy himself of the reasonableness of his belief, as to be able to answer them that ask a reason of it. And therefore every man not only may, but ought to inquire into the grounds of his faith, or religion, and not so to rely upon any human authority, as to believe, without examination, every thing that is proposed to him.

These are the two points, or doctrines, or observations, which I raised upon this text; and which I designed both to explain and to vindicate. The former of them I have already despatched. I now proceed to the other.

II. It is not indeed in direct words asserted in the text, but it is by necessary consequence inferred

from it. For if every Christian ought so well to inform himself about what he believes, as to be able *to give* others *a reason of his faith*, then he certainly not only may, but ought to examine every thing that is proposed to his belief, and upon that examination to make a judgment, whether it is reasonable for him to believe it or no.

This consequence is so direct and full from the text, that there is no avoiding of it. And indeed this is no more than what is every where taught and delivered as the privilege and as the duty of all Christians, even those that are private persons. It is not to the bishops and pastors and guides of souls only, but to the people, that St. Paul directed that precept of his, in his First Epistle to the Thesalonians, that they should *prove all things*, and *hold fast that which is good*, ver. 21. Every thing was to be tried and examined before they admitted of it. And if after that trial and examination they found it to be a good doctrine, a doctrine agreeable to the gospel, then they were to embrace it, and so to hold it as never to depart from it.

It was likewise to all Christians that St. John wrote when he said these words, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*. 1 Ep. iv. 1. What is the meaning that we are not to *believe every spirit*, but to *try the spirits, whether they be of God*? Certainly this; that we are not to believe every one that takes upon him to be an inspired man, or that would pretend to deliver doctrines to us as the infallible truths of God; but we are to examine those that make this pretence, whether they can really



produce their credentials that they come from God. We are to examine likewise the doctrines they teach, whether they be really agreeable to those principles of natural and revealed truths which we are sure came from God. And there is great reason why we should all thus try before we trust; *for*, as the apostle adds, *there are many false prophets*, that is, false teachers, *gone out into the world*.

Furthermore, what is the meaning of all those several exhortations and declarations of our Saviour, where he desired the people *to search the scriptures*, John v. 39, as the true way to bring them to the belief of him and his doctrines; where he cautions them against calling any man *rabbi*, or *master*, *upon earth*; *because they have but one Master, or Teacher*, Matt. xxiii. 8, 10. and that is, our Lord Jesus? where he reproaches them for too blindly following their guides, telling them, *if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*, Matt. xv. 14? where he expostulateth with them for relying too much upon the authority of their teachers, and therefore rejecting his doctrines because their superiors did not believe them? *Why of your own selves*, saith he, *did ye not judge that which is right?* Luke xii. 57. Sure if any thing can be plain, it is plain from the New Testament, that God not only allows, but also requires, that every man in matters of his salvation should judge for himself; and not so give up himself to the conduct of any human authority, but that he ought still to be at liberty to examine doctrines of faith by the common principles of reason and divine revelation; and according as he finds them agreeable to or inconsistent with those principles, either to admit them or reject them.



I will but mention one thing more upon this head, and I have done. Mind these words of St. Paul : *If we, says he, or an angel from heaven, preach to you any other gospel than what ye have received, let him be accursed*, Gal. i. 8. How! not an apostle, not the greatest of all the apostles, St. Paul, who laboured more abundantly in the work of the Lord than all the apostles, not for him to preach another gospel; no, nor an angel from heaven, though he came with never so many signs and wonders; (as undoubtedly if an angel from heaven was to preach, it would be with miracles in abundance;) I say, for these not to be believed, when they taught things contrary to and inconsistent with the standing revelations of gospel, as we have them in the scriptures; nay, not only not to be believed, but to be abhorred; to be utterly rejected as impostors and false prophets, and to be accursed; I say, what are we to gather from hence? Certainly, if we can gather any thing, we may gather these three things:

1. That there is but one gospel; that very gospel which was preached by Christ and his apostles, and which we have conveyed down to us in the books of the New Testament.

2. That whatever article of faith is proposed to our belief, if it be repugnant to that gospel once delivered to us, is to be rejected as a false doctrine; and the preachers of such doctrines, let them be apostles or angels, let them shew never so many miracles for the proof of their mission, are not to be heard, but held as false prophets.

3. That every man who hath once been instructed in the gospel of Christ, and is a professor of it, is to judge for himself, whether any doctrine that is pro-

posed to him be agreeable to that gospel or no. If it be inconsistent with the gospel which he hath once received, he is to reject it, though St. Paul, or an angel from heaven, should preach it to him. I say, of this every man is to be judge for himself; for otherwise why should St. Paul say this to the people of Galatia? why should he tell them so solemnly, that they should adhere to that gospel he had preached to them, notwithstanding all the pretences of the false teachers that were come among them? Nay, he tells them, *that if he himself, or an angel from heaven, should preach to them any other gospel than what they had received before, they should not be heard.* Did he not plainly in this make them the judges of that gospel, and of what was consistent with it and inconsistent with it? was not that gospel the standard by which they were to measure all other new doctrines? and were not they themselves to be the measurers? were not they to be the judges?

Certainly it must be so; and for the making it appear, I would only ask this; Whether it had been a fault or a sin in the Galatians, after St. Paul had thus warned them, to have taken up, or given credit to any doctrines of the false apostles contrary to the gospel? If it be answered, that this were a sin and a fault in them, if they did so, then I infer undeniably that they were true and proper judges of what was the doctrine of the gospel, and what was not. It was their parts, having been instructed in the true gospel, to have compared the novel doctrines of the false teachers with it, and accordingly as they found them disagreeing to the gospel, to have rejected them. If this had not been their duty, it

could not have been their sin to have followed the false teachers in their new doctrines.

So that the inference remains strong and undeniable, that in matters wherein man's salvation is concerned, he is to be a judge for himself. And God having given him a rule to judge by, he is to examine all doctrines that are proposed to him as necessary to be believed by that rule; and whatsoever doctrine he finds different from or inconsistent with that rule, he is to reject, whosoever the man be, or whatsoever the church be, that proposeth them to him.

And thus I think I have sufficiently made good my point: but I ought not thus to leave it. How plain soever this matter seems to be, yet there are at this day [1687] no small stirs made about it. Nay, I believe I may say, that upon this very point the main disputes do turn which do at this day divide the Christian church in these parts of the world.

Thus far we are all agreed, that the religion of Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. And likewise we are agreed, that every man ought so far to inquire into Christ's religion, as to be satisfied what it is, and where it is to be found. But then here it is we begin to differ.

As Christianity now goes in these western parts of the world, there are two different ways prescribed for the coming to the knowledge of Christ's religion; and each of them is vigorously contended for by their several parties.

The one way is that which the Roman catholics go; and in short it is this: That every man, as to the concernments of his soul, is so far to inquire and examine, till he be satisfied which is the true church

of Christ. But after he hath once found that true church, he has no need of further examining, but he is from henceforward to yield up himself to the government of that church, and to believe every thing which that church teacheth without further examination ; because that the true church is infallible, neither can be deceived itself nor deceive others.

The other way is that which the protestants go ; and it is this : That Jesus Christ being the sole author of our faith and religion, we ought not, we cannot believe any thing as an article of faith, or as necessary to salvation, but what he and his inspired apostles taught ; nor have we any certain way of knowing what they taught, but by the holy scriptures they left behind them. These we are sure are the word of God, and do contain all the necessary points that Christ and his apostles preached to the world ; and “ whatever is not contained in them, or may not “ be proved by them, is not,” cannot be “ required of “ any to be believed as of necessity to salvation,” (as our church in her Articles doth word it.) And therefore whatever doctrine is recommended to us as an article of faith, if we find that the scriptures teach it, or that it may by good consequence be proved from thence, we do heartily and willingly embrace it. On the other side, if we find any doctrine which is recommended to us as an article of faith to be repugnant to the holy scriptures, or to clash with them, we do certainly reject it. And this right and privilege of examining matters of religion, and trying them by the holy scriptures, we do not so appropriate to the guides of the church, (though they of all others, as they are best qualified, so are they most especially obliged to do this,) but we do allow it also to every

man of a private capacity, so far as he hath means and opportunities of informing himself.

For since, as the Roman catholics say, every man's salvation depends upon his professing the true religion of Jesus Christ, it is but infinitely reasonable that every man should judge for himself about that religion. And since, as we say, (and most of them likewise acknowledge,) that all the religion of Jesus Christ is contained in the scriptures, it is but infinitely reasonable, say we, that every man should be well satisfied that the doctrines which are proposed to him as articles of faith are really the doctrines of holy scripture. And whether they be so or not, he is to be the sole judge himself, taking in all the best helps he can have for the making such a judgment.

This is a plain account of the two ways that are prescribed or advised for the coming to the true faith; the one by the Roman catholics, the other by us.

In this both agree, that every man is allowed, nay is bound, to make inquiry or examination of his religion: we are all agreed that every man should *be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him*. But then here we differ. The Roman catholics say, we are to examine till we have found the true church; but when once we have found that, we are for ever after to be concluded by that church's determinations. The protestants say, that a man cannot know the true church but by examining the doctrines which that church holds and teacheth, whether they be Christ's doctrines or no; and there being no way to know that, but by examining whether they do really agree with those doctrines that are taught



in the holy scriptures, I say, since this is the case, there is a necessity of allowing every particular man to try his faith by the holy scriptures, and after that trial to judge for himself.

So that you see here is a material difference between us. The Roman catholics do only so far inquire into religion as to find the true church, and after that, they submit to their church's guides in all things. The protestants do inquire into Christ's religion as it is taught by the word of God, and by that they find out the true church. The one believe the doctrines of religion for the church's sake that teaches them; the other believe the church for the doctrines' sake that she teacheth, as being in all things agreeable to the word of God. The one take up their religion from the church; the other take up their church from its religion. Or if you would have me express this business in the language of my text; if a protestant be required *to give a reason of the hope that is in him*, it will be necessary for him to give a rational account of all the articles of his faith. But if a Roman catholic be required to do this, it is sufficient to say, that he rests satisfied in the judgment of his superiors; or, to use the words of the Rhemish Testament, "The man saith enough, " and defendeth himself sufficiently, that answers, he " is a catholic, and that he will live and die in that " faith, and that his church can give a reason of all " things which are demanded of him." So that if the church be but able to give a reason of the faith, it is no great matter whether the man that professeth that faith be able to give an answer or no.

And now having laid before you the two different ways of giving a reason of our faith, I will, if you

please, fairly examine both of them; and I will begin with the Roman catholics' way of inquiring and giving a reason of our faith.

And that, as I told you, is this; that though we are every one to examine and inquire about our religion, and so to be able to give a reason of our faith, yet the main thing we are to inquire or examine into is this; Which is the true church where infallibility is lodged? for after we have found that church (as we find it nowhere but in the church of Rome) our inquiry is at an end. We are from henceforward to believe and to obey the church.

This is the point I am now to discuss, and I will do it with all the fairness and all the plainness I possibly can; though all that I shall do at this time towards it is only to ask these two or three questions.

First of all, since it is acknowledged by them that we are to make use of our best skill and reason and sagacity for the finding of the true church, how comes it about, that all on a sudden, after we have found that true church, we must discard these things as useless tools, and never after employ either our skill or our reason or our natural sagacity, for the making a judgment of any point that concerns our souls? This is very hard and unfair dealing with those parts that God Almighty hath given us. In all other concernments of our lives we find, and are sensible, that those powers and faculties in us which first enable us to understand any business, and to set about it, we have need of in the conduct of that business ever after.

In every paltry design of this world, a man thinks it not enough that he hath laid his projects well, and



put them into good hands, but if he means to have success in his designs, he is obliged to pursue them, and to make use of all the talents of wit and industry he hath to bring them about. Reason is never to forsake him, or, if it do, it is ten to one but he is forsaken of others upon whom he depended. But now, as the case stands in religion, according to the Roman catholic doctrine, reason, and thinking, and studying, and examination, and industry, and search, though they be necessary tools, to be made use of for the putting a man into good hands, yet, after he is in those hands, he is to throw all these things away, and never after to make use of them. Doth this look like a doctrine of God? No, certainly: every one that understands the dignity of his own nature, and knows what reason is, and how far men differ from brutes, and in what things they excel them, will be of another opinion. How can any man conceive that God should have given us our reasons and understandings merely for the finding the true church, and afterwards those reasons and understandings should be altogether insignificant as to matters of religion; that we should have no use of them, but be acted like so many machines! Is this to offer a reasonable service to God?

The Roman catholic doctrine supposeth us all to have eyes, and to be able to choose our way, so long as we are heretics, or so long as we are wavering; all that time they allow us to have our eyesight, and then they bid us to inquire, and examine, and to prove, and to try. But when afterwards any of us hath found the true church, (that is, their church,) then we are no longer to examine, or to prove, or try. But what is this but in plain English to tell

us, God hath given you eyes for the choice of your guide, but after you are satisfied that you have light on a good guide, you are from henceforward to put out your eyes, and for ever after to act as you are ordered by your guide ?

Another question I would ask is this. They tell us that we are to inquire and examine matters of religion, till we have found the true church, but after that, we are to acquiesce in the determinations of that church. Now the question I would ask is, How we shall find the true church any other way than by comparing the doctrines that the church holds with the holy scriptures ?

I know that the Roman catholics have taken a great deal of pains to give us the notes of the true church. And of all others cardinal Bellarmine has taken the greatest pains, and hath given us fifteen notes of the true church, and one of those notes is sanctity of doctrine. We do all grant that he is perfectly right in this, however he may be mistaken in the rest. For it is certain that the true church of Christ is to be known by the doctrines it teacheth ; and no church can be a true church, unless it professeth and teacheth Christ's true doctrines as to all the foundations of Christianity. But now if this be so, as it certainly is, how can any man pretend to know the true church, without a particular examination of the doctrines that that church teaches ? If one mark of the true church be, (as Bellarmine says it is,) that it should teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ, then certainly we cannot know the true church till we have examined its doctrines ; and therefore, before we can know the goodness of a church, we are to examine and inquire whether the doctrines that

are taught in it be all honest, and Christian, and pious, and agreeable to the word of God. So that, after all, every man is to examine by the word of God what things he is to believe in order to his salvation.

But, thirdly, here is a greater point yet behind : for admitting the church of Christ to be infallible, nay, admitting the church of Rome (which pretends to be the catholic church) to be infallible, yet would private men be the better for it? would they be more secure from errors in faith than we who pretend to no infallibility? This is a very great question; unless every particular guide that is to convey the church's faith down to us be infallible likewise; nay, unless every private man that hearkens to that guide were also as infallible in taking the true sense of the doctrines, as the teacher is infallible in proposing them.

And, lastly, here comes the great question of all; How doth it appear that that church, or any church, or all churches taken together, are infallible in all things that they propose as articles of faith? I must confess I take this to be a very difficult thing to be proved; nay, I say further, it is impossible to be proved; nay, as far as a negative can be proved, we can prove the contrary.

But I dare not now enter upon these points, but shall reserve them, together with what remains upon this argument, to another opportunity.

# A SERMON

ON

1 PETER III. 15.

— *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

THE point which I was last insisting upon was this: That it appears from this text, that it is the duty of every Christian so to satisfy himself about the reasonableness of his belief, as *to be able to answer them that ask a reason of it.* And therefore every man not only may, but ought to inquire into the grounds of his faith or religion, and not so to rely upon the authority of his guides, as to believe without examination every thing that is proposed by them.

This is the point before us. And I endeavoured to make it good by such arguments as I thought most convincing, viz. such as were drawn from plain texts of scripture.

After this, I proceeded to give an account of the two different ways and methods that are now on foot among us as to this matter. We are all agreed that every man is allowed, nay, is bound to make an inquiry or examination about his religion; we are all agreed that every man should *be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him.* But then here we differ: one party saith that we are to examine till we have found the true church; but when we have found that, we are to be for ever after concluded by that church's determinations, because that

the true church, wherever it is, is infallible to all that she proposeth as matters of faith. The other party saith, that a man cannot know the true church but by examining the doctrines which that church holds and teacheth, whether they be Christ's doctrines or no. And there being no way to know that, but by examining whether they do really agree with those doctrines which we are sure were taught by Christ and his apostles, and are contained in the holy scriptures; I say, since this is the case, there is a necessity of allowing every person to try his faith by the holy scriptures, (making use of the best means he hath for the right understanding of them,) and after that trial, to judge for himself. So that you see here is a material difference. The one side would have men only so far inquire into religion as to find the true church, and after that, to submit to their guides in all things. The other side would have men to inquire into Christ's religion as it is taught in the word of God, and to make use of their own judgment all along. The one believes the particular doctrines of religion for the church's sake that teacheth them; the other believes the church for the sake of the doctrine that she teacheth. The one takes up his religion from the church, the other takes up his church from its religion.

Having thus given an account wherein the main difference between the two churches lies, as to this point, I proceed to inquire which of these two ways, theirs or ours, doth most recommend itself to a prudent man. And here I urged two things against their way, and for ours; that their way seems very hard and unnatural, because it puts an affront upon the faculties that God hath given us, for the examin-

ing and judging of things by ; and, secondly, that it seems to be destructive of itself ; for since both sides are agreed, that that cannot be the true church which doth not hold the true doctrines of Jesus Christ, and since they themselves do assign it as a mark or a note whereby we may come to know the true church, namely, that it holds Christ's true doctrines ; how is it possible for any man to find the true church, without first examining what doctrines that church holdeth, and trying them by the scriptures, whether those doctrines be the doctrines of Jesus Christ or no : still making use, as I said before, of the best means he hath for the right understanding of those scriptures. And if thus much will be allowed us, we will contend for no more.

Thus far I went the last time. And now, in the third place, I have this other thing to add about the inconveniency of their way more than ours ; and that is, allowing that to be true which they ground this their method upon, viz. that the true church is infallible ; I say, allowing this to be true, yet it doth not at all appear, that particular persons that follow their way have any better means of coming to the knowledge of a right faith, than they have among us, and according to our method ; and perhaps not near so good.

Both they and we acknowledge the scriptures are infallible ; and we say, that they are likewise so plain in all necessary points, that every Christian, with the help of such means as he hath daily at hand in our church, may rightly understand them, as to all points needful to his salvation ; so that every honest Christian among us may have a sure foundation to build his faith upon.



On the other side their position is, that a private man cannot be certain that he is in the right way, unless he be certain that he adheres to the doctrines of the church, and squares his faith by them; the church being the only infallible interpreter of scripture.

Well now, we will suppose a man heartily to believe this; is satisfied that he hath not true faith, unless he believes according to the faith of the church. Here a question ariseth, how shall he be able to know whether he believes as the church believeth, that he holds all points of faith as the church holdeth them? This he must be able certainly to know, or else he hath no better ground for his faith than his neighbours. Though the church is infallible in what she teaches, yet what doth this infallibility signify to him, unless he knows what the church teacheth? But how shall he know that any better than he can know what the scripture teacheth? Nay, how can he know that half so easily as he may do the other? it being certain, that the definitions of the church in matters of faith, as they are more in number, so they are more nice and intricate than those of the scripture are.

Well, but to this it is answered, that private men, who have not abilities and opportunities of learning the doctrines of the church from its authentic decrees, must rest satisfied in the judgment and direction of their particular guides, and take the doctrines of the church from them. Well, this is very true: but here the question returns: Are particular guides infallible or no? If they be not, then it is possible that the guides themselves may be mistaken, and, if so, they may mislead the man that trusts to



them ; and then what service doth the church's infallibility do him, in order to the certainty of his faith ? If it be said that particular guides are infallible, I only answer, it would be well if they were so ; but yet it is a thing that they themselves do not pretend to. Well, but supposing every guide or confessor was infallible in all things that he taught for the doctrine of the church, as the head of the church himself is, yet still the difficulty is not over. When a guide doth expound the catholic faith to a private man, and the man is certain that he doth rightly expound it, yet how is he certain that he rightly understands the meaning of those doctrines that his guide hath declared to him, for the faith of the church ? It is not a new thing for those that do make it their business to instruct others as plainly as possibly they can in matters of religion, to have their discourse most horribly misunderstood and perverted by those that hear them. And now, if the thing be so, and this be the condition of all private men, that they may mistake what is taught them, then what security hath a man that gives up himself entirely to the conduct of his guide, that he is not mistaken in matters of faith, any more than we have, who, besides the use of our guides, make use likewise of our own eyes in examining by the scriptures the doctrines they teach us ? nay, I ask, whether indeed our security be not much greater than theirs ? It seems to me that there is the same difference in our cases, as there is (to make the most favourable instance I can) between a man's taking up the truth of a relation at the third or fourth hand from a credible person, and so depending upon the truth of it, as he understands it, from him, with-

out further examination; and a man's taking the same story from the same person, but yet withal not sticking there, but taking pains to trace it up, as to all the particulars, to the original author: or as there is between a man's receiving a piece of coin for current money, merely upon the credit of his goldsmith, without further trial, and a man's both advising with his goldsmith, and withal making use of all the other helps he can come by for the discerning true money from counterfeit.

But I am got a little out of my way; all that I meant to shew under this head is this, that admitting the church to be infallible, yet private men would not be the better for it; would not be more secure from errors in faith, than we who pretend to no infallibility, unless every particular guide that is to convey the church's faith down to us be infallible likewise.

Nay further; admitting every lawful teacher of the church to be infallible in what he taught, yet even that would not secure us from error, unless also it was supposed that every man that hears him was as infallible in taking the true sense of those doctrines, as the teacher is infallible in proposing them. And if these things be so, I leave it to any man to judge what greater matters the church's infallibility, if there was any such thing, could do as to the securing men from errors in faith, than the protestant way of adhering to the infallible scriptures in all matters of religion, and making use of all the helps we can for the right understanding of them.

But, fourthly, let us at last come to the main point upon which all this dispute is grounded; and that is plainly this: Whether indeed Christ hath

any infallible church upon earth or no? One side affirms that the true church of Christ is infallible, and that their church is that church. The other side deny that any church is infallible. If what they say be true, then we grant there is all the reason in the world that we should in all things submit to the definitions of their church, and it would be foolish to dispute any particular points after we were certain that that church had decided them; though yet, as I have told you, the means of coming to that certainty are not so infallible.

This is indeed the main fundamental point in debate between us, and upon which, in a manner, all the other points of difference do depend. And you see, that for the clear resolution of this point there are two things to be examined: first, whether Christ hath any infallible church upon earth; secondly, whether that church, which lays claim to this infallibility, be that church of Christ upon earth.

But I shall drop this latter question; for if it do appear that no church is infallible, there will be no need of confuting the claim that any particular church makes to that privilege.

I hope I may inoffensively treat a little on this argument; it is a point wherein our church is nearly concerned, and wherein she hath most expressly declared herself: and therefore it cannot be looked upon as a controversial point among us. It is a point likewise that is at present [1687] the great inquiry of unsettled minds, and therefore it cannot be judged unseasonable to speak a little about it. I would not willingly offend or exasperate any person upon earth, and most of all I would avoid it in

my preaching. But if in the choice of the matter of my argument I should happen to displease, yet I promise those that are offended, that I will not displease them in the manner of my handling it. For I desire only to inform men's minds, but neither to provoke any men's passions nor to humour or gratify them :

In speaking to this point, I desire only to premise this, in order to your clearer understanding the state of the question.

We throw out of our debate all disputes about the church's infallibility in fundamentals. We are ready to grant, that the church of Christ is infallible in all points necessary to salvation. We do not indeed approve much of the word *infallible*, because in this case it is improperly used ; (for in true speaking, the church is not more infallible in fundamentals than in those points that are not fundamental ;) but since the proposition is often put in these terms, we do not change them. But then you are to remember, that all we mean, when we say that the catholic church is infallible in fundamentals, amounts to no more than this, that wherever there is a church of Christ, (as Christ hath promised there shall always be a church,) that church will retain all the foundations of Christ's doctrine ; will hold and teach all things that are absolutely necessary to salvation. And the reason why we affirm this is, because, in truth, without this it would be no church at all. But then this doth not hinder but that in the first place any particular church may err and fail, even in fundamental points, so as to cease to be any longer a true church. Because God hath not confined his catholic church to any particular place or country.

It is enough for the fulfilling of Christ's promises, that there shall for ever, to the end of the world, be somewhere or other a true church of Christ, professing and teaching all the essential, necessary points of his religion, which is all that is needful to the making of a church.

Secondly, neither doth this concession of ours hinder but that every particular church, nay, and all the churches of the world, though they may be infallible in fundamentals, (as we have phrased it,) that is, though they do hold the foundations of Christ's religion, and upon that account are true churches; yet, for all that, they may err and mistake in matters that do not belong to the foundation. They are not secured by any privilege that Christ hath made over to them, even while they continue true churches, either from teaching falsehood for truth, or imposing such practices upon their members as are inconsistent with the laws of God. So that they cannot be relied upon, merely upon account of their authority, without an examination of their doctrines and practices. And this is indeed the true state of our point.

The question then that is here to be discussed is, Whether Christ hath any church upon earth absolutely and in all things infallible; so that that church is at all times secured from errors in all things which she proposeth or teacheth in matters of religion? this, I say, is the question; and it is determined by the church of England in the negative. And my work at present is, (though it be a very hard, nay an unreasonable task to prove negatives, yet,) fairly and modestly to lay before you some of the many reasons why we do not believe that there is any such infallible church, or that Christ ever in-



tended there should be such a one, though the time will oblige me to be very short.

I. And the first thing we offer is this; that if Christ had meant that there should be always an infallible church upon earth, we cannot but believe that it would have been somewhere or other expressly told us in the New Testament, both that there was an infallibility lodged in the church for ever, and likewise in which of all the churches in the world this infallibility was lodged; that so, upon all occasions, Christians in all ages might know where to have recourse to that infallible church. But now, this not being done in the whole New Testament, neither by our Saviour nor by his apostles, it is a strong argument to us that no such thing was ever intended by them.

We are not ignorant that several texts of the New Testament are produced as proofs of the church's infallibility. But in truth, if those texts be but never so little considered, and men be not carried away with the mere sound of words, it will appear to any unbiassed reader, that even those texts do not speak at all to the business of infallibility; or, if they do, they concern none but the apostles themselves.

Thus, for instance, to prove the church's infallibility, they urge the words of our Saviour to St. Peter; *I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18. But now, whatsoever be here meant by the *rock* upon which Christ would *build his church*, whether St. Peter's person, or the faith that he then confessed, as most of the fathers interpret it; yet it is plain that Christ did not here promise *infallibility* to his

church, but only a *perpetuity*. He did not say that his church should never *err*, but he said, that his church should never *perish*. Every one that knows any thing of the language of scripture will be satisfied that is the meaning of the phrase, that *the gates of hell should never prevail* against his church.

Again: They urge these words of our Saviour, Matt. xviii. 15. where he advises, that if a *man's brother trespass against him*, and the matter cannot be made up between them, either by a private admonition, or by referring it to the arbitration of two or three friends; in that case, the last remedy that the injured person had was to *tell the business to the church*; and if the man refused to *hear the church*, he was then to be accounted *as an heathen or a publican*, ver. 17. But what is here meant by *telling the church*? there lies all the difficulty. Why, every one that considers the scope of the place will plainly see that Christ meant no more than this; that if the man could not make a private agreement with his brother that had injured him, he was to complain publicly of the injury to the congregation; and if upon the advice or rebukes of the governor of the assembly the man did not make satisfaction, but still continued obstinate, the injured person was not from henceforward obliged to use any more endeavours to bring him to a sense of his fault, but might after that look upon him as *a stranger*, or *an heathen*, and no longer as *a brother*.

This is plainly the sense of the place. But what is this to the business of infallibility? if it make any thing that way, it rather proves the infallibility of the superiors of every congregation, or the infallibility of every bishop's consistory, in redressing



complaints that come before them, than the infallibility of the church in determining matters of faith.

Thus again it is urged, that Christ told his apostles that *he would be with them*, that is, with them and with the bishops that succeeded them, *to the end of the world*, Matth. xxviii. 20. Right; Christ will always, by the influence of his Spirit, be present, not only with the governors of his church, but with every member of his church. But yet, I say, this doth not imply that every member or every bishop is infallible. For my part, I should think it did more concern our Lord Jesus, by virtue of this promise, to make his church *impeccable*, than to make it *infallible*. My meaning is, that it was a much more desirable thing to secure his ministers and people from the danger of sin than from the danger of error. But the former he hath not done, and therefore I much doubt of the latter.

Again : It is urged, that Christ said to his apostles, that after his departure he would *send the Comforter to them, even the Spirit of truth, and when he came he should lead them into all truth*, John xvi. 13. This is very true : and our Saviour was as good as his word ; for he did by his Spirit *lead* the apostles *into all truth* : nay, to that degree, that we believe they did infallibly, and with an unerring spirit, preach all the truths of God, and nothing but the truth. But then it is plain that this promise was made only to the apostles, and not to all that should come after them. For after he had said that *the Spirit should lead them into all truth*, he presently adds these words, *and he will shew you things to come*, ver. 13; viz. he would endue the apostles with the gift of prophecy. But now I hope all those that

succeed the apostles in the church do not pretend to any such assistance of the Spirit as that was. If the bishops of any church can shew that they have the gift of prophecy in a continued succession, and that they can foretell things to come, as the apostles did, then we will own that this promise of Christ was directed to his church in all ages. But not till then.

Lastly, it is brought for a proof of the church's infallibility, that St. Paul tells Timothy, 1 Ep. iii. 15, that *the church was the pillar and ground of the truth*. Why, admitting that St. Paul said so, yet it is plain that it was not of *the church*, but of *a church*, a particular church, viz. that of Ephesus, that he spoke these words; which church of Ephesus, where Timothy was bishop, is not now in being, though while it was in being *it was a stay and support of truth*. But what doth this make to the proving that any church at this day is infallible? But supposing we understand these words of St. Paul of the church catholic, as the Roman catholics would have us, yet even this will do them no service at all. For we say, in the first place, that he might style the church *a pillar and support of truth*, not upon account that it always is so, and always shall be so, but because it ought to be so; just as our Saviour calls all his disciples, all Christians, *the salt of the earth*, and yet in the same place tells us, that that *salt may become unsavoury*, Matt. v. 15. It is the duty of Christians to be *the salt of the earth*, and of the church *to be a pillar and support of the truth*; but it doth not follow from these attributes, that either the one or the other shall always perform or make good those characters. I say, if we do give this ac-

count of the passage in St. Paul, there is none of them can confute us.

Again: We say, in the second place, that the church may be always *a pillar and ground of the truth*, and yet be far from being infallible. All that St. Paul can be supposed to have meant by this phrase, if he had spoke of the catholic church, can be no more than this, that the church of Christ should always be *the pillar and support* of that necessary truth which goes to the making up *the mystery of godliness*, ver. 16, which he speaks of in the very next verse; that is to say, the fundamental truths of Christianity shall be always taught and professed in the church, viz. so much truth as will carry the professors of it to heaven, if they live up to it. But this comes infinitely short of infallibility. The church may be thus *a pillar and support of the truth*, and yet at the same time hold and teach a great many errors.

But although this is sufficient to shew that this text, if understood of the church, makes nothing for infallibility; yet I believe any indifferent person that reads the words, and minds them well, will be almost forced to acknowledge that they are not to be understood of the church, but to be applied to Timothy himself, to whom the apostle writes, so as to be read thus: *These things I write unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, the church of the living God, as a pillar and support of the truth.* He is giving rules to Timothy how to behave himself in the church, which he calls *the house of God*. Now, after that he called it *an house*, one would think it not proper

that he should in the very same breath call it *a pillar of an house*. But now it is very natural to give that name to Timothy, and to exhort him to behave himself as such in the house of God; as indeed the apostles and bishops are in scripture called by the name of *pillars*. And if you take the text in this sense, (as I do verily believe this is the meaning of it,) it is still further off from the purpose that it is brought for.

These are the chief texts in the Bible that are brought in favour of the church's perpetual infallibility. But you see by that little I have said of them, that not one of them doth near come up to the point; nay, indeed, doth not in the least touch it. And yet one would think, that so great a point as this, a point which, as they say, so nearly concerns every man's salvation, should not have been thus silently passed over, both by our Saviour himself, and by those inspired men that pretend to give us an account of his doctrines.

2. But I leave this, and proceed, in the second place, to another reason why we cannot believe that Christ hath any infallible church upon earth, viz. because we do not find that any of the primitive churches ever pretended to such infallibility; no, not the church of Rome herself. We do not find that the doctrine of the infallibility of the church, much less of the Roman church, is asserted by any one ancient council, or by any one ancient father. We do not find, that, in the controversies which arose in the ancient church about matters of faith, the guides of the church ever made use of this argument of the church's infallibility for the quieting and ending of them; which yet, had they known of any

such thing, had been the properest and the easiest means they could have used. Nay further, we know that the ancient fathers had another method of confuting heretics and schismatics than by appealing to the church's infallibility; namely, by bringing their doctrines to be tried by the ancient usages and doctrines of the apostolic churches, and especially by the divine oracles of scripture, which they looked upon as the entire and only rule of faith.

We know further, as to the church of Rome, that by what appears by the carriage and behaviour of other churches in the primitive times towards that church, in matters where they were concerned together, it must be thought impossible that those churches should ever have entertained any opinion, or so much as imagination, of the Roman church's infallibility; they making no scruple, whenever there was occasion, to oppose the sense of that church as vigorously as they either did or could oppose any other particular church that differed from them.

3. But, thirdly, another reason why we are hardly brought to believe that any church is infallible is, because we do not see any effect of this infallibility in the world, or any good which hath accrued to the church, which may not as well be ascribed to God's ordinary assistance of every Christian church without infallibility as with it.

It is said indeed, that without a living infallible judge controversies that arise among Christians cannot be ended. Why, that very church that pretends to infallibility are not yet agreed among themselves about several points pertaining to religion. Nay, this very business of infallibility, (as important a point as it is,) as to the seat of it, where, or in whom



it is lodged, is yet as great a controversy among them as any.

It is said, that without an infallible judge the scriptures cannot be expounded; the sense of texts cannot be ascertained. Why, as to this, we desire to be informed what advantages that church that pretends to infallibility hath in this respect above other churches that pretend to none. Do they in that communion understand scripture better than those who differ from them? or have they settled or cleared the sense of any one doubtful text, by virtue of infallibility, during all the time they have laid claim to it? It will be a hard matter to produce one text of scripture, the sense of which was by this means ascertained. We all know, and must confess, that all those texts of scripture which were difficult and obscure at the first, remain so to this day, for any thing that any infallibility hath done toward the clearing of them; and if the sense of any obscure passage in those holy books be more cleared, or better ascertained to us than they were formerly, next to the blessing of God, we are obliged for it to the learning and industry of fallible commentators.

These are shrewd presumptions that it was not the design of Christ that we should arrive to the knowledge of his will by the conduct of an unerring guide, but rather by honestly and industriously employing those parts and those ordinary means which he hath afforded us for that purpose.

I might mention another reason why we think it very unsafe to rely upon any church's infallibility, as to matters of faith, (and which indeed is worth all the rest;) and that is this: because it may be



made to appear that that church, which only of all others claims infallibility to herself, hath actually erred in her determinations about matters of faith.

In saying this, I say no more than what our church hath declared in her nineteenth article. The words of it are these :

“ As the church of Jerusalem, of Alexandria, and  
“ Antioch have erred, so also the church of Rome  
“ hath erred, not only in their living, and manner of  
“ ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.”

But I have held you too long already to engage you in a new argument, especially such a one as needs no proof to us, we owning ourselves protestants, and being presumed to be already satisfied about it.

And therefore I take my leave of this argument, and close all with these petitions in our Liturgy :

“ That it would please God to give all his people  
“ increase of grace, to hear meekly his word, and  
“ receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth  
“ the fruits of the Spirit.

“ That it would please him to bring into the way  
“ of truth, all such as have erred and are deceived.

“ That it would please him to strengthen such as  
“ do stand, to comfort and help the weakhearted,  
“ to raise up them that fall, and finally to beat down  
“ Satan under our feet.”

God of his infinite mercy grant this, for the sake of his dear Son. To whom, &c.

# A S E R M O N

ON

2 PETER III. 16.

—*in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

ST. PETER in this chapter is treating of the second coming of Christ to judge the world, and answering the objection that some scoffers in those days made against the truth of it, upon account that it was delayed so long. To this he replies several things, and he backs what he had said with the authority of St. Paul, who had written concerning these matters. Ye should *account*, says he, *that the longsuffering of our Lord* (which is objected against) *is meant for our salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, ver. 15; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things, ver. 16.* And now, having mentioned St. Paul and his Epistles, he adds this note as it were by way of parenthesis, [*In which*, says he, *there are some things, &c.*]

Upon which words, before I come to treat of the main point I design from them, I shall desire leave to make a few strictures or short notes.

1. First of all it is doubted, whether the first words of my text, *in which*, do refer to St. Paul's Epistles, or to *the things* he writes of in those Epistles. For the relative article is in some copies expressed in

one gender, ἐν αἷς, to refer to the Epistles; but in most copies ἐν αἷς, to refer to *the things* spoken of. According to the first reading, this is the proposition in the text, viz. *That in St. Paul's Epistles there are some things hard to be understood.* According to the other reading, this is the proposition; *That among those particulars that St. Peter is now insisting on, and which St. Paul likewise hath in his Epistles treated of, there are some hard to be understood.* There is some difference between these propositions; but yet they are both of them certainly true: and I do not see any such matter of consequence which of them we pitch upon, as to think it worth the disputing whether of them is to be preferred.

2. There have been various conjectures what those particular points or passages are in St. Paul's Epistles which St. Peter here calls δυσνόητα, *hard to be understood*, and which he says men in his time did *wrest to their own destruction*. St. Austin will have it, that he had his eye on St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith without works; which some heretics in those days perverted to very ill purposes. Others give other accounts, but they are all uncertain; and it is a business of greater curiosity than usefulness to be inquisitive about this matter.

3. It is more to our purpose, in the third place, to take notice of this; that it is not only in St. Paul's Epistles that there are τῶνα δυσνόητα, *some things hard to be understood*, but in all the other scriptures likewise: and seems to be intimated here by St. Peter, when having told us how liable *unlearned and unstable men were to wrest some passages* in St. Paul's Epistles to a wrong sense, upon account

that they were *hard to be understood*, he adds, that they did so likewise *with other scriptures*.

Indeed it cannot be denied, that there are abundance of passages, both in the writings of the Old and New Testament, which are very *hard to be understood*. Some upon account of the depth and mysteriousness and obscurity of the things themselves that are delivered; and many more upon the account of the shortness and difficulty of the expressions wherein they are cloathed. But most upon account of our ignorance and unacquaintance with the idioms of the languages they were wrote in, and the customs and histories and other things proper to those places and persons they were first intended for, which are referred to in them. So that if any man will say that the whole scripture is plain, and easy to be understood, he affirms very rashly. There are a multitude of texts which will puzzle the most learned and intelligent man now living to give a certain account of. And therefore easily may we imagine that there is a far greater multitude, which an ordinary unlearned reader will be able to say little or nothing to.

4. But I observe, in the fourth place, after what manner in all times the scriptures have been dealt with; even in the apostolical times there were men that *wrested them*. The word is στρεβλοῦσι; they did distort them from their natural meaning; they did torture them, to make them speak what sense they would have them; they did not study to take up their opinions from scripture, but they studied to force the scripture to comply with those opinions they had taken up before. This is properly *wresting the scripture*; and this practice, as it did begin very

early, so hath it ever since continued in the world. In every age, and at this day as much as ever, the scriptures have been *wrested* from their proper sense and meaning to serve turns: among all the numerous divisions and factions that have been, or are in the Christian church, either with reference to doctrine or practice, there is not one of them but hath always urged scripture in its own defence. There was none of the old heretics (were their principles never so unscriptural) but had abundance of texts to vouch for their orthodoxy, if they might have the liberty of interpreting them. And at this day, not only we do urge the scriptures for our cause, but Papists, Socinians, Quakers, Antinomians, and all the other divisions among us, do all with equal confidence appeal to the scripture for the truth of their cause. Now certainly the scripture can have but one true sense, let the pretenders to that sense be as many as they please. And therefore all these men holding contradictions to one another, cannot all be supposed to interpret scripture faithfully and sincerely; but some of them do *wrest* it in order to the serving that cause which they have espoused.

5. But, fifthly, it is worth our notice what kind of persons they were in the apostle's time that did thus *wrest the scripture*; they were, as he tells us, ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι, *unlearned and unstable*. It may be he meant the same thing by both these words. But if they be to be distinguished, by *the unlearned* we are to understand the ignorant and unskilful; they who never applied their minds to the careful reading of the scripture, nor have taken care to furnish themselves with those helps and acquirements which are necessary to be had, in order

to the right understanding it when they read it. By *the unstable*, we are to understand those that are not well fixed and established and grounded in the faith of Christ; (as the word ἀσθήρικτοι most properly signifies;) but, for want of true principles, do fluctuate this way and that way, and are *tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*, as St. Paul expresses it, Ephesians iv. 14: these were *the unlearned and unstable* men that did, in the apostle's time, wrest the scripture. And such kind of persons have they always been that followed this practice of theirs in succeeding generations. Whatever innovations or corruptions have been brought into the church, whatever departures have been made from catholic faith and catholic charity and communion, they had generally both their rise and continuance from such *unlearned and unstable* men.

That which I would gather from hence is this: How very necessary it is for those who would rightly expound the scripture, both to furnish themselves with a competent measure of such kind of learning and skill and knowledge, as is proper for the understanding of that book, and also to be thoroughly grounded and principled in the substantial and fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. If either of these qualities be wanting, a man is like to make sad work, if he sets up for an interpreter of scripture.

6. The sixth and last thing I take notice of in these words is, the sad consequence of a man's *wresting the scriptures*, which is here mentioned: *They wrest them*, says the apostle, *to their own destruction*. This consideration ought to make us all infinitely careful how we abuse or pervert the scrip-



ture, or make a tool of it for the serving our own ends. By such wicked proceedings we shall not only do a great mischief to religion and the church, but undo ourselves at the long run. It is not indeed every error and mistake about the sense of a text of scripture that is of this dangerous consequence, nor many such errors and mistakes put together. A man may be ignorant or mistaken in a thousand texts of scripture, without any danger of his salvation. But this is that we say is dangerous, when a man makes use of scripture to countenance his vicious inclinations; as either when he so perverts or corrupts the Christian doctrine, as to give encouragement to a wicked and unchristian life, or suborns texts of scripture for the making or upholding divisions and schisms in the Christian church. This we say is such a *wresting of the scriptures*, as it is to be feared those that use it may too truly be said to do it *to their own destruction*.

And thus much I thought fit to speak by way of explication of the text. It shall now be my business to resolve the three following inquiries :

First, Since the character that St. Peter gives of the scripture, especially of St. Paul's Epistles, is, that there are in them *δυσνόητα*, *things hard to be understood*; with what truth can we protestants affirm that the scriptures are plain and perspicuous, and easily understood by vulgar capacities?

Secondly, Whether from this point, that there are in scripture *things hard to be understood*, we can reasonably draw such a conclusion as this, that therefore there is a necessity that Christ should have left in his church some visible, infallible judge for the interpretation of them?

Thirdly, Whether the difficulty and obscurity of the holy scriptures, and their being liable on that account to be wrested and perverted to evil purposes, be a sufficient ground for the forbidding the use of them to the people? and whether for all that, every man may not, and ought not, seriously to apply himself to the reading of the holy scriptures, or the hearing them read?

I. My first inquiry is, How can the protestant's position be true, that the scriptures are plain and perspicuous, and intelligible to ordinary capacities; when yet, if we may believe St. Peter, there are in them *things hard to be understood*?

This is a difficulty that the Roman catholics do urge us with, in order to the making us quit the scriptures as our rule of faith, and take up tradition in the place thereof. But this would appear no difficulty at all, if they would but rightly represent our doctrine in this matter.

1. In the first place, we do not say that every passage of scripture is plain, easy, and perspicuous; nay, we acknowledge that there are several passages of it obscure and intricate, and such as will puzzle, not only an ordinary reader, but even the most learned to give the meaning of. So that we leave room enough for St. Peter's assertion, that there are in scripture *τίνα δυσνόητα, some things hard to be understood*. Nay, if any man will enlarge his proposition, and say that there are *many things hard to be understood* in it, we do readily concur with him.

2. Neither, secondly, do we say that those passages which are intelligible to a learned reader, to one that is well versed and experienced in these kind of matters, are all of them easy and intelligible

to an unlearned one. We acknowledge as well as they, that as a man is more or less furnished with proper helps and means and instruments for the understanding the scriptures; as he hath more or less improved himself by acquired knowledge and learning; so he shall in proportion understand more or less of those holy books. And we do not, upon a pretence of private inspiration from the Spirit of God, teach or think that every well-meaning godly person is presently qualified to expound the scriptures.

3. But, thirdly, this is all that we say, as to the plainness and perspicuity and intelligibleness of the scriptures, that though there be in them many difficult passages, nay, perhaps whole books, yet, as to all those things wherein the salvation of mankind is concerned, they are sufficiently plain, and easy to be understood, both by the learned and unlearned. So far as scripture is a rule of faith and manners, (and we contend that it is a perfect rule of both,) so far it is perspicuous and obvious to all capacities; supposing the men come with an humble and honest mind, desirous to learn their duty, and willing to practice it after they have learnt it. We do not say that there are no difficulties in scripture; but we say, that all those things that are necessary to be believed or practised are not difficult: or, if some of them be more obscurely expressed in one place, they are more plainly in another. So that none can justly except against the scripture, as to the fitness of its being a rule of faith and manners, and very necessary to be read and known of all men, upon account of the difficulty or obscurity of it.

But as to this the Roman catholics urge, that it

is not so clear that the scripture is plain and perspicuous, even in necessary points, wherein the salvation of men is concerned. For if it were, how comes it to pass that there are so many disputes among the protestants about the sense of scripture, even in matters which they account (at least one side of them doth account) fundamental and necessary? To this I answer, That though we should admit this suggestion to be true, that the protestants differ in their interpretation, even in fundamental points, yet it is no argument against the plainness and perspicuity of scripture, in matters of faith and manners. For things may be plain enough to all disinterested men, that are not plain to those who are strongly prejudiced against those things by education, or passion, or interest, and the like. If no writing be allowed to be plain and intelligible, till all men be agreed in the sense of it, or till it be impossible that a man that sets his wits awork should be able to find any colour for the wresting it to another sense than that which was meant by the author; then farewell all plainness and perspicuity in any writing; nay, not only so, but farewell all plainness in any speeches or declarations that are made by word of mouth. So that this objection will as much disserve the cause of the church of Rome, who would have tradition and the authority of the pope for their rule of faith, as it will disserve our cause, who pretend to be governed by the scriptures.

But I would ask, Why doth any Roman priest, when he hath to deal with a protestant, and would bring him over to their communion; I say, why doth he endeavour to convince him from the scriptures of the erroneousness of our religion, and the neces-

sity of believing and practising as their church teacheth? Why doth he labour to prove, by texts of scripture, those several points which they would bear us in hand are necessary to be believed, and which yet we deny, as transubstantiation, for instance, and the supremacy of St. Peter, and the like? Doth not every man among them that proceeds in this way, for the convincing of protestants, (and yet they all make use of this way,) plainly acknowledge by this very proceeding, that all those points that are necessary to be believed or practised are sufficiently plain in the scripture? and that even an unlearned man is capable of understanding them? for certainly no man ever endeavoured to prove a thing to another, but by something which he thought the person he would prove it to would readily apprehend, and see the force and evidence of. This is therefore a concession, that he doth in his own conscience believe the scriptures to be sufficiently plain, at least in all necessary points, even to ordinary understandings.

II. But to proceed to our second inquiry, which is, Whether from this point, that there are in scripture *things hard to be understood*, we can reasonably draw such a conclusion as this, that therefore there is a necessity that Christ should have left in his church some visible, infallible judge, to whom all Christians should resort for the interpreting scripture?

This indeed is a conclusion which the Roman catholics would draw from St. Peter's proposition in my text; and for any thing I know, it is as good an argument for the infallibility of the bishop of Rome as any they produce. But, however, let us examine what ground there is for drawing such a consequence.

1. In the first place, where is the force of the argument? Some texts of scripture are hard to be understood: therefore the bishop of Rome is infallible; or therefore there must be somewhere a visible authority, to which all Christians should resort, for the infallible declaration of the sense of scripture: and since no man pretends to such an authority but the head of the church of Rome, therefore in him it is to be presumed it is lodged. But why doth it follow that, because some scriptures are hard, therefore there is need of an infallible interpreter of all scripture? What is it that doth connect these two propositions together? If indeed all scripture had been hard to be understood, and not only some things in it; or if those things in it that are really hard to be understood had been so necessary that a man could not go to heaven without understanding them; if either of these things had been true, there would have been some colour for the drawing such a consequence as this. But since, on the one hand, all that is necessary to be believed or practised in order to salvation is sufficiently plain in scripture without such an interpreter; and, on the other hand, whatever is difficult in scripture is not necessary to be understood; it plainly follows there is no need of any infallible interpreter at all, because we may understand all things needful in the scriptures without such an interpreter.

2. But, secondly, if God had meant to have established a standing visible infallible authority in the church for declaring the sense of scripture, it cannot be doubted but he would in those scriptures have plainly told us somewhere or other; and not only



so, but have given us such particular accounts and descriptions of the person vested with that authority, that all Christians in all ages might have known who he was and where he lived ; that so they might be able to make application to him at all times as there was occasion. But now there is not a word of this in the whole scripture, but a perfect silence both as to the authority itself, and the person or persons in whom it is lodged. So far are the scriptures from giving us the least intimation that the bishops of Rome are set up by God to be the infallible declarers and interpreters of the sense of scripture to all the Christian world, from generation to generation ; and that consequently in all disputes concerning the meaning of any passage in the Bible we ought to have recourse to that see ; I say, so far are the scriptures from this, that it doth not in the least appear from them that God hath appointed any means at all of that kind for the coming to the knowledge of the sense of scripture. There is no mention of any infallible judicatory in the whole Christian world erected by our Lord Jesus for this purpose, and much less of the court of Rome being that judicatory.

If our adversaries would convince us of either of these things, they must bring other kind of proofs than those words of our Saviour, “ *Tu es Petrus,*” *Thou art Peter*, Matt. xvi. 18 ; and “ *Pasce oves,*” *Feed my sheep*, John xxi. 16 ; and “ *Dabo tibi*” “ *claves,*” &c. *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xvi. 19. For these do make no more to the business we are speaking of than this expression, “ *Hic sunt duo gladii,*” *Here are two swords*, Luke xxii. 38, doth to the proving the

pope's temporal jurisdiction over all Christians, as well as his spiritual; or than *God's making two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night*, Gen. i. 16, doth to the proving that the pope must consequently be above the emperor.

3. But, thirdly, so far are we from being directed by God's word to apply ourselves to any visible judge, much less the bishop of Rome, for the understanding hard texts of scripture, that it doth propose quite another method to us for that purpose. The method which the scriptures themselves do provide for the coming to a right knowledge and understanding of them is plainly this, to read them carefully, to examine the things spoken of, to compare one thing with another, and to judge of all according to the analogy of faith; to use all the prudent means and helps that may further us in the knowledge of the truth, to pray to God for wisdom, to confer with one another, especially our spiritual guides, and above all things to free ourselves from lust and passion, and all other prejudices and prepossessions; and to come with an honest and humble mind, well disposed both to receive the truth and to practise it: for it is the *upright man that God will guide in judgment, and those that are gentle, to them will he teach his way; the secret of the Lord being with them that fear him; and to such only he hath promised to shew his covenant*, Ps. xxv. 14, 12, 9. These are the means which the Bible prescribes for the coming to the knowledge of God's word, and these are the rational proper means of attaining to truth of any kind, and for receiving benefit by any books; but most of all proper for those kind

of truths and those kind of books we are now speaking of.

But is not this a quite different thing from giving up ourselves entirely to the conduct and dictates of an unerring judge? or when we are entangled in any difficulty, to have no more to do than to ask the opinion of him that sits in the infallible chair, and to acquiesce in it, whatsoever it be? These two ways are so different from one another, and indeed so inconsistent, that no man who finds the former laborious way of reading, and examining, and judging, of *proving all things*, and *trying the spirits*, and the like, recommended in scripture, will or can be easily convinced, that the latter short expeditious way of appealing to the bishop of Rome in all controverted cases was ever so much as thought of when the Bible was written.

Far am I, by what I have now said, from endeavouring to weaken or undermine the rights of ecclesiastical authority. We do readily acknowledge that every Christian church in the world has a right and authority to decide controversies in religion, that do arise amongst its members, and consequently to declare the sense of scripture concerning those controversies. And though we say that every private Christian hath a liberty left him of examining and judging for himself, and which cannot, which ought not to be taken from him, yet every member, every subject of a church, ought to submit to the church's decisions and declarations, so as not to oppose them, not to break the communion or the peace of the church upon account of them, unless in such cases where obedience and compliance is apparently sinful, and against God's laws.

But then what is this to the pretences of the church of Rome? Every national church hath as full an authority in this matter as the church of Rome. And besides, the authority which we ascribe to every church, and to the church of Rome among others, doth not imply a power of determining controversies infallibly, so as to oblige all Christians to receive and believe their determinations as the very oracles of God. For we say, that no one man, nor any society of men among Christians, no, not a general council, is infallible, or free from possibility of error: but we only say, that every church hath power so far to determine differences that arise among its members, and to oblige them so far to compliance, as to be able to preserve peace and unity and communion in itself.

4. In the fourth and last place, it is an idle thing to talk of the necessity of an infallible expounder of scripture upon this account, that some things in scripture are hard to be understood; was there nothing to be said against it but only this, that though the Roman catholics pretend that there is in the church such an infallible judge, and hath been always since Christ's time, and that that judge is the bishop of Rome; yet for all that, the Christian world hath not for so many ages received any considerable benefit (if indeed any at all) from this infallibility, as to the clearing of difficulties or silencing disputes that have been among Christians concerning the sense of scripture. We do indeed heartily acknowledge that we have received great benefit, and abundance of light for the expounding of several texts of the Bible, from the histories and doctrines and practices of the universal church of Christ, and

from the writings of the fathers, and other ecclesiastical authors in all ages (some of which writers may perhaps have been bishops of Rome;) this, I say, we readily grant and contend for. But in the mean time it is a quite different thing from a single man, or a multitude of men, interpreting scripture by a divine power and commission, and in an authoritative and infallible way. That which we say is, that as obscure and difficult as the scriptures are in many passages, and as plenary a power as the popes have had in the clearing such obscurities, and untying such difficulties, yet the world to this day hath seen no effects of this power in that kind, hath received no benefit from it, in order to the clearing of dark texts; but all the texts that were obscure before, are so still, for any authoritative interpretation that any pope hath given them. And this alone is enough to spoil all the Romish pretences of the necessity of an infallible judge, to expound the scriptures where they are obscure. And thus much on our second inquiry upon this point.

III. I come now to the last; which is this: Whether the difficulty and obscurity that is to be met with in the scriptures, and their being liable on that account to be wrested and perverted by unlearned and unstable men, be a sufficient ground to debar the people from the use of them. This is indeed the Romish gloss upon this text. "Hereby it is very plain," (say the translators of Rhemes in their note upon this text,) "that it is a very dangerous thing for such as be ignorant, and for wild-witted fellows to read the scriptures." (vid. Rhemish Testament.) And they commend the wisdom of the council of Trent, which hath taken care to forbid the



common reading of the Bible, except to such particular men as shall have express license thereto from their ordinary. On the contrary, our doctrine is, that no lay-person that can read, ought to be discouraged from reading the holy scriptures, and much less forbidden it; but rather advised and persuaded to the frequent reading of it: only he should be directed in the reading of it, and most seriously cautioned, that he do not turn that wholesome food he may there meet with into poison, by his wicked misuse of it.

But let us take this matter a little into examination. *There are in the scriptures some things hard to be understood.* Therefore, say they, the people must not read them. But is this fair dealing with the people? because some things are hard to be understood, must they therefore be deprived of the benefit of the plain things that are there, and which are incomparably more than the hard things are? or because there are some things hard to be understood, must therefore the key of knowledge be taken from them? must they be debarred the means and opportunities of understanding as many of those things as they can?

Well, but it is further said, that ignorant and unstable men, when they read the scriptures, are apt to *wrest them to their own destruction*; and therefore the scriptures should be kept from all such, just as we keep weapons from children, for fear they should hurt themselves with them. To this I answer: If indeed the scriptures were of no more or greater use to laymen than edged tools are to children, and if there was the same danger that laymen would do mischief to themselves by reading the scriptures, as



there is that children would hurt themselves, if the use of knives and swords was permitted to them; I grant there would be some reason to conclude that the Bible ought to be as far removed out of the people's way, as weapons are out of the way of children. But there is no such matter.

1. For first we say, that every one of the people, be he never so ignorant, is capable of receiving great advantages and benefits by reading the scriptures, or hearing them read; for they are the means which God hath appointed for the *making us all wise unto salvation*. They are the instruments by which we come to the knowledge of the Christian religion.

2. Nay, there is a great deal more probability that an ignorant man that comes with an honest mind to the reading or hearing of the scriptures, will put them to a good use, and learn some things by them, and go away better from them, than there is danger that he should pervert them, and go away worse. It is true, most readers or hearers, when they have done all they can, will be ignorant of the meaning of many texts of scripture; nay, and it is very likely they will mistake and misconstrue not a few: but then we say there is no great harm in this, either to themselves or others. For every mistake in the sense of a text of scripture is not *a wresting of the scripture*, and much less *a wresting it to a man's own destruction*. For *wresting the scripture* is interpreting the scripture to serve a man's own private turn, and *wresting them to his own destruction* is forcing them to declare in favour of some wicked, unchristian doctrine that he hath espoused, or some wicked, unchristian practice that he lives in. So that though a good man, nay, perhaps every good man, is

now and then mistaken in the meaning and application of the scriptures, yet none but a bad man can *wrest them*, especially *wrest them to his own destruction*.

3. But thirdly, how liable soever the scriptures are to misconstruction, and what bad use soever some men may make of them for the broaching of heresies, or the making or continuing schisms in the church, which are the proper instances and effects of *wresting the scriptures*; yet, all things considered, it is more for the good of the world, that the use of them should be allowed to all persons, (upon account that all persons are capable of receiving benefit from them, and most in all probability will,) than it is for the good of the world, that the use of them should be generally forbidden, (upon account that here and there some persons do *wrest them*, and abuse them to their own mischief, and the disturbance of the church.) There is nothing that God hath made, or contrived, or appointed, but is capable of being abused; and too many there are that will and do abuse it. But is it therefore better upon the whole, that every good creature of God should be laid aside, (at least as to the common use of it,) because it is thus liable to be abused, and some men here and there do mischief to themselves and others by thus abusing it? Certainly no: for by this rule of reasoning all learning, all arts, all books in the world, as well as the Bible, and all preaching and praying in public; nay, those creatures of God which he hath made for the support and delight of our very natural lives, I say, all these things upon this principle must be forbidden, at least to the multitude and generality of mankind.

These things, I think, may be sufficient to shew the unreasonableness of the popish position which we are now speaking of. But I design more upon this argument than barely vindicating the doctrine of our church from the popish exceptions; I would, if it were possible, convince you, not only of the lawfulness, but of the obligation that is incumbent upon all sorts of men, most diligently and seriously to apply themselves to the frequent reading of those holy books.

And in order to that, I would represent this to your consideration, viz. that this business of diligently reading the scriptures is a thing recommended to us both by the scriptures themselves, and by the practice and advice of the most ancient and most holy Christians, and by the reason of the thing itself. And whoever doth discourage or discountenance this in any one doth act in opposition to all these.

1. First of all, it is recommended to us in the scriptures themselves. This may be sufficiently gathered from the command of God in the sixth of Deut. ver. 4. *Hear, O Israel, &c. The words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates,* ver. 6—9. By what words now could God more emphatically signify to his people that it was his pleasure, that all

sorts of men among them, unlearned as well as learned, should thoroughly acquaint themselves with the word of God, than he hath done by those expressions. If any one say that this only concerned the Jews, with reference to the law of Moses, but signifies nothing to us Christians; I answer, that the reason of the precept will concern us as much or more than it did them. For if, when God delivered his law to Moses, which was but a carnal, temporary law, he did yet give such a charge to the Israelites, that every soul of them should continually exercise themselves in reading and learning this law, and teaching it to their children; can we imagine that less is expected of us Christians, with reference to that everlasting, spiritual law of the gospel; that law by which alone all men are to expect salvation, which our Lord Jesus and his apostles first revealed by word of mouth, and then took care that it should be conveyed down to us by the scriptures of the New Testament? No, certainly; if it was their duty to read the word of God which they had, to meditate upon it, and to be so well versed in it, that it should be as familiar to them as the most ordinary things they used; as familiar as if it had been wrote on the doors of their houses or the gates of their cities; then certainly we Christians are under as great an obligation to acquaint ourselves as familiarly with that word of God which we have, and which was delivered by a greater Prophet than Moses was, and which is of far greater concernment to the world.

But to come to our Saviour and his apostles. Did our Saviour, when he preached to the Jews, discourage any of them in his days from reading the scriptures? so far from that, that he exhorts all of

them so to do, bidding them *search the scriptures ; for in them they expected to have eternal life ; and they were they that testified of him*, John v. 39. And St. Paul makes it the great commendation of Timothy, that *from a child he had known the scriptures, which, saith he, are able to make a man wise unto salvation*, 2 Tim. iii. 39. And so far were the Bereans from being blamed or checked, that, when St. Paul preached the Christian religion to them, they did not barely rely upon his authority, *but did daily examine the scriptures, and inquired whether his doctrine did agree with them or no*, Acts xvii. 11. that they are much applauded for it in the Acts of the Apostles, and accounted *more noble than those of Thessalonica*, because they did so. Nay, *the eunuch of Candace queen of the Ethiopians*, that read the scriptures (as he himself confessed, Acts viii.) without any means of understanding them, yet was this his overdiligence (as it might be accounted) so far from being imputed to him as a fault, that God Almighty made it the means and the occasion of his conversion to Christianity. . For upon this his reading, (though without knowledge,) God sent Philip to him by a miracle, who did so effectually expound what he read, as to make a proselyte of him to Jesus Christ before he parted from him : so ready is God to afford his assistance to all those that use the means that he hath appointed, though they be under never such disadvantageous circumstances.

It is true, in all these passages that I have quoted, the scriptures, that are here mentioned, are meant of the scriptures of the Old Testament ; and there is good reason for it, for in truth there were no others



then extant, the scriptures of the New Testament not being then wrote; and therefore it is an idle thing to expect a precept out of the New Testament for the reading of the New Testament, when the canon of it was not yet finished. But, for all that, the reason of the texts I have named will hold as strongly for our reading the New Testament, now that we have it, as they did for the reading of the Old at that time. Did our Saviour command the Jews *to search the scriptures* of the Old Testament, because *they testified of him*, and were the means by which they might be convinced that he was the true Messiah? and will it not be a duty as much incumbent upon us *to search the scriptures* of the New Testament now, since they are the means that God hath appointed both for the conveying down to us the doctrine of the gospel, and the evidence of the truth of it? Were even the scriptures of the Old Testament, in those days, *able to make a man wise unto salvation*? and are not the scriptures of the Old and New Testament together much more able to make us, in these days, *wise unto salvation*? Was it Timothy's commendation that *from a child he had known the writings of Moses and the prophets*? and will it be any disparagement to us grown men, that we exercise ourselves in the study of what was taught by Christ and his apostles? Lastly, was God so ready to assist a pagan even in an extraordinary way, when he conscientiously read the prophets, though without probability of understanding what he read? and can we think that he will deny his assistance, and blessing, and grace to us in an ordinary way, when we read the gospel of Christ, and are in a good measure in a



capacity of understanding it, and receiving benefit from it?

2. But enough of this. I desire in the second place it may be considered, what the sense of the primitive and best Christians was as to this matter. How did they practise and advise as to people's reading of the scripture? Why every body that is in the least versed in the histories of those times, knows what a mighty value all the Christians of the early ages set upon the Bible, above all other things. They joyfully heard it read in their public assemblies, and they diligently read it, and studied it, and meditated upon it in their private houses. They would, several of them, have it read to them, even while they were taking their ordinary food. They took care not only to read it, but to get several portions of it by heart. They instructed their young children in it; and instances we have of those that both knew the scriptures and inquired into the sense of them, even from their childhood. In those days, as St. Jerom tells us, "any one as he walked in the fields might hear the ploughman at his hallelujahs, and the labourers in the vineyards singing David's Psalms." And the same father tells us, that "of those many virgins that lived with Paula," (a famous devout lady in those days,) "it was not allowed to any of them to be ignorant of the Psalms, or to pass over one day without learning some part of the scripture." And to such a degree were the women of that time skilled in the scripture, that Julian the Apostate lays it as a charge, as a matter of accusation against the Christians. Lastly, such a veneration had the Christians in those days for the Bible, that they esteemed and prized it

above any thing in the world, and would rather part with their lives than deliver it up to the pagan officers that came to demand it of them. And whoever did deliver up their Bibles were always accounted as apostates.

And lest any one should suspect that this diligence of theirs, in reading the scriptures, was rather an effect of the people's forwardness to meddle with things above them, than any thing they were advised and directed to by their spiritual guides, there are sufficient proofs to the contrary. The devout people in those days were not more forward to read and learn the scriptures, than the bishops and guides of the church were to exhort them to it, and encourage them in it. St. Augustin thus speaks to the people; "Think it not sufficient that ye hear the scriptures in the church; but also in your houses at home, either read them yourselves, or get some other to read to you." Origen saith, "Would to God we would all do as it is written, *Search the scriptures.*" St. Chrysostom says to the people, "I admonish you, I beg of you to get books." And again: "Hearken to me, ye laymen, ye men of the world; get ye the Bible, that most wholesome remedy of the soul. If ye will do nothing else, yet at least get the New Testament, the Gospels, St. Paul's Epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles, that they may be your continual teachers." Lastly, So far was that father from confining the use of the Bible to men in holy orders, that he doubts not to affirm, That it was as necessary to be read by laymen, as by those who were professed monks. Nay, if we will believe him, much more necessary; for these are his words: "Ye think the reading of the

“ holy scripture belongeth only unto monks, whereas  
“ in truth it is much more necessary for you than for  
“ them.” We see then, that in those days, when  
Christians lived much more holily and purely than  
(it is to be feared) they have done since, there was  
no check given to any man’s reading the scriptures ;  
but, on the contrary, all the encouragement imagin-  
able. It was not then thought that ignorance was  
the parent of devotion, or that the scriptures were  
too dangerous to be trusted in the hands of un-  
learned, ordinary persons. It was not then imagin-  
ed, that reading the Bible was the way to make men  
heretics, or schismatics, or any way refractory ei-  
ther against the laws of Christ, or the laws of the  
country where they lived. But on the contrary,  
they took it to be the best expedient in the world  
to make men good Christians, and peaceable sub-  
jects, and hearty lovers one of another ; and accord-  
ingly they did advise, they did exhort, they did  
encourage every man, as he had an opportunity, to be  
frequent, and diligent, and serious in the reading  
and studying of this best of books, the dearest pledge  
that we have visible among us of the love of God,  
and the most effectual instruments to promote vir-  
tue and goodness, and universal Christian holiness in  
the lives of men.

3. And very great cause had they thus to think  
of the holy scriptures, and thus to recommend them  
to the careful perusal of every Christian. For in the  
reason of the thing, (which is the third and last  
point we are now to speak to,) the holy scriptures,  
above all other books in the world, do recommend  
themselves to the diligent study of every man that  
would be a good Christian. Of all books in the

world they cannot but be judged, of considering persons, to be the finest, the noblest, and every way the most useful and profitable for all orders, and degrees, and sexes, and ages, and conditions of Christians to spend their days in the reading and meditation of. For here, and here only, we have the measures of all God's wisdom and knowledge in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus, discovered to mankind. Here only we have the authentic declarations of God's mercy to us, and of the terms and conditions upon which we are to expect everlasting salvation from him. Here it is from whence we are to fetch both the matter of our faith, and our evidence for the truth of it. Here are the fountains from whence we are to draw both the knowledge of our duty, and directions for the practising of it, and comfort and support in and after we have practised it. Here are contained the invaluable promises that God hath made to his servants in Christ Jesus, and the unspeakable encouragement he hath given to all penitent and returning sinners. Here are those affectionate invitations, those pathetic and hearty persuasives of God to men, to oblige them to love him, and to be eternally happy, that do make good men amazed and astonished at the infinite condescensions of the divine Goodness. And here are those strong, those powerful, I may say, those irresistible motives to be good, to be happy, to love God, to love virtue, to love our own souls, that one may as much be filled with wonder and astonishment that any human creature can be so sottish, and stupid, and insensible, as not to be vanquished thereby, to become so holy and happy as God would have them to be. In a word, here are

all things that are either needful, or useful, or delightful, to a good man, and all things (as far as a book can have them) that may prevail with one that is not good to become so.

And judge now, whether, these things considered, the Bible be not a book fit to be read and studied by all sorts of persons. Fit, did I say? that is too little: is it not necessary? is it not an indispensable duty? doth not every man who hath opportunity both sin against God, and neglect the eternal concernment of his own soul, if he is remiss and careless in this matter?

Let me therefore seriously exhort all of you to be diligent, to be constant in conversing with the holy scriptures. Let it be the care of your lives and the delight of your minds to read them, to think of them, to confer about them, to let every one about you feel the effects of that love and esteem and zeal you have for them. Teach them to your children and your servants, recommend them most heartily to all that you have influence over; speak of them always with great reverence, and hear them read with humility and attention.

Which that we may all do, and receive the benefit of so doing, let us join in putting up our prayers to God in the words of our Liturgy, being the Collect for the Second Week in Advent, with which I conclude.

“ Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy scripture  
“ to be written for our learning, &c.”

# A S E R M O N

ON

1 CORINTH. XII. 13.

*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

THE meaning of these words will appear to every one that will mind the argument which the apostle is treating of in this chapter. The point that he lays down is this; That though there be great variety of conditions and functions among Christians, and though likewise there was great variety of gifts and powers in those days bestowed upon men for the discharge of those functions; yet all these several sorts of Christians, thus severally gifted and qualified, did but make up one society; and all the gifts and graces bestowed upon them were wholly in order to the public and common benefit of that society.

This, I say, is the point that the apostle here endeavours to possess his readers with a sense of. And accordingly in the verse before the text, he illustrates it by such a similitude as would reach the apprehensions of the meanest person he spoke to. *As the body, saith he, is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ:* that is, so also is the Christian church; so also is Christ and all Christians. Christ is the head, and all Christians throughout the world are the members; and altogether do



make one society, one corporation, or as the same apostle expresseth it in Romans xii. 4, 5. *As we have many members in one body, and all the members have not one office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

This is St. Paul's proposition. And for the further clearing and confirming of it, he doth in the text shew that it was the business and design of both those sacraments which our Lord appointed in his church, to unite all Christians, by the means of the Spirit, to Christ Jesus, and to one another, and so to make them one body. *By one Spirit*, saith he, *are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* As if he had said; The design of our baptism is by the influence of the Spirit to incorporate all believers in one society, of what nation or of what condition soever they be, whether Jews or Gentiles, bondmen or freemen. They are all, by being baptized, entered into Christ's church, and made one body: they become members of Christ, and members one of another. This, I say, is done by means of that one Spirit which animates and enlivens that whole body, and gives strength and nourishment to every part of that body. And as this is the design of our baptism, so it is also the design of the other sacrament wherein we partake of the cup of the Lord; for there also we are made to drink into one Spirit. Our eating that bread, and drinking of that cup, (he expresses only one of them, but he means both,) I say, that is the means which Christ hath appointed for our receiving the continual influences of the Holy

Spirit, by which the union that is between Christ and his members is preserved and maintained.

This is as plain an account as I can give of the meaning of my text : and now if any one ask what design I mean to pursue in this text, what purposes I would apply it to? I answer, That this text will serve to several good purposes, viz. For the clearing several points that it is fit we should all be truly informed in.

I. I name these three ; First of all, This text will give us good help towards the ascertaining the true number of the Christian sacraments, about which the churches are divided.

II. Secondly, This text will help us to give a plain and true account of a considerable article of **our** faith ; and that is, the unity of the catholic church, which is here asserted.

III. And thirdly, This text will shew us the way that was used in the primitive church, as to the people's receiving the sacrament ; viz. That they did not only partake of the bread, but of the cup too. The sacrament was administered in both kinds to all the faithful. For St. Paul here speaking of this sacrament, calls it *a drinking into one Spirit*. As elsewhere in the scripture, the Lord's supper is expressed by *breaking of bread*, without naming the distribution of the cup, (from whence some would form an argument, that the faithful did then only receive the bread,) so in this text the same Lord's supper is expressed by *drinking of the cup*, without naming the giving of the bread. From whence we may certainly draw this conclusion, that the one was as necessary to the people as the other. And they may as well say, that where the cup is only men-

tioned, there was no bread broken ; as they can say, that where the bread is only mentioned, there was no cup given : and consequently wherever it happens in any text, that for shortness sake (or for some allusion that suited better with the scope of the writer) one kind or species of the sacrament only is expressly mentioned, yet the whole sacrament, in both the kinds of it, is in all those texts to be understood.

I begin with the first of these points. 1. This text doth fairly insinuate to us the true number of the Christian sacraments.

It is plain, that the apostle in this text doth expressly speak of the Christian sacraments : and it is as plain that two sacraments, and no more than two, doth he here mention. And these two are the two sacraments which the church of England, with all primitive antiquity, doth own for the only sacraments of Christ's institution, viz. baptism and the supper of the Lord. These two now it is certain and evident that they are sacraments, truly and properly so called ; that is to say, they are outward signs and pledges of an inward grace that goes along with them, and they were instituted by our Lord Jesus in the most express terms that can be ; and by the very words of the institution it appears that they were designed to be of perpetual obligation even to the world's end. But as for other sacraments, or more sacraments than these, there is a deep silence both in this text and throughout the whole New Testament. And yet the council of Trent, which is the rule of the Roman church, hath, besides those two, made five more ; and so strictly hath that council obliged all of that communion to receive and

own seven sacraments, that it hath pronounced “ a  
“ curse against all those who shall affirm that there  
“ are either more or fewer sacraments instituted by  
“ Christ than seven, or who shall affirm that any  
“ one of those seven are not truly and properly sa-  
“ craments.”

This we must needs think is a very hard and severe imposition upon the faith of Christians ; especially, when we can shew, that some of those seven cannot, in the nature of things, be true and proper sacraments : and besides, when we do confidently challenge any man of that communion to produce any one council, any one father, nay, any one single writer, for eleven hundred years after Christ, that said or taught there were just seven sacraments, and neither more nor fewer, of Christ’s institution. Peter Lombard, by all that we can find, (who lived in the twelfth century, and was the father of the schoolmen,) was the first who asserted this precise number. But can the bare opinion of such a man, at such a distance from the primitive church, be of authority enough to ground an article of faith upon, nay, and to make it damnable for any man to believe otherwise ?

But I know it will be said, that the ancient fathers do give the name of sacraments to marriage, to orders, to penance, and to all those other things which are now by the church established for sacraments of Christ’s appointment. Why, be it so ; yet this doth not come home to the business. For if they will pretend to make a true and proper sacrament of every thing that some fathers have applied the name of sacrament to, they may with as much reason make seven and twenty sacraments as seven.

At this rate they must make fasting, and praying, and weeping, and washing the disciples' feet, and crossing of themselves, and vowing virginity, and many other such things ; I say, they must make all these to be sacraments, as well as the five they have been pleased to obtrude upon us ; because indeed every one of those things is by some father or other called by the name of a sacrament. Nay, the scripture is a sacrament, and the whole religion of Christ is a sacrament in the language of some of the fathers. But now for sacraments truly so called, and in that notion in which both they and we do understand the word, namely, for such outward visible signs, or symbols, or elements as were appointed by Jesus Christ, for the conveying spiritual grace to all that did worthily partake of them ; I say, in this notion of sacraments, it will be hard to find more, either in scripture or in the fathers, than those two we are all agreed upon, baptism and the Lord's supper. St. Cyprian, I dare say, thought of no more, when he tells us, " That then men may be thoroughly sanctified, and become the children of God, (*si utroque sacramento nascantur*,) if they be regenerated by both the sacraments." If he had believed more sacraments than two, it is impossible he should have expressed himself in this manner. St. Austin likewise hath a memorable passage to this purpose : " Our Lord Jesus Christ," says he, " hath knit Christians together with sacraments," (which is exactly the same thing that is here said in the text,) " which sacraments," saith he, " are most few in number, most easy to be observed, most excellent in signification ; and these are baptism and the Lord's supper." And in another place he tells



us, *Hæc sunt ecclesiæ genuina sacramenta* ; “ These “ are the two sacraments of the church.” But if after all this, the church of Rome will, without the authority of the scriptures, without the suffrage of any one single author for above a thousand years together, nay, against the reason of the thing, and against the sense of the primitive fathers, make it an article of faith, and necessary to salvation, that every Christian should believe that Christ ordained seven true and proper sacraments of perpetual use in the church, and all conferring grace to the worthy receivers of them ; whereas, by all that appears, he ordained but two of this nature ; who can help it ? This only we must needs say, That she assumes a vast authority over men’s conscience. But whether it be reasonable, without better evidence, to submit our judgments and consciences to that authority, let indifferent persons judge.

2. But I have spoke enough of this point. Let us again look over the text, and take up some other. *We are all*, says the apostle, *baptized into one body, and made to drink into one Spirit*. From these words this now may be observed in the second place.

We have here a plain declaration and assertion of an article which we profess to believe in our Creed, and that is, the unity of the church. In the Creed which we repeat every day, we own the belief of the catholic church. And in the Creed which we repeat on Sundays and holidays we do more explicitly declare the oneness of that church in these terms ; “ I do believe in one catholic and apostolic “ church.” If now we took no other guide but the holy scriptures for the meaning of this article, it



would appear as plain a business as any in the whole Bible. But as the different interests of men have been concerned in the interpretation of it, it is become an intricate thing, a bone of contention, a fountain of I know not how many controversies. But the reason hereof is very evident. Men, through their overgreat love of themselves, and favour to their own party, have no mind to let the church of Christ lie in common, as without doubt our Saviour intended it, but every one will be engrossing the whole church to themselves, and to those of their communion. And this hath put their wits upon the rack oftentimes for the devising and inventing God knows how many marks and tokens whereby to distinguish the true church from false and pretended churches: though yet it is evident enough to any bystander, that the marks they give of the true church are rather contrived to suit with the quality and genius of that church they appear for, and whose cause they would serve, than taken from the holy scripture, or collected by the measures of right reason.

But let us see what account the holy scriptures, and especially the scripture of my text, give of this church, this one church, about which so much noise is made.

It is plain from the holy scripture, that it was the design of our Lord Jesus to deliver to mankind the whole will of God, so far as their salvation was concerned in it; to reveal to them all that was needful either to be believed or practised, in order to their future happiness. All these things thus delivered and revealed by him, we call the Christian religion: and this religion was taught to the world partly by

himself, and partly by his apostles ; and this religion was put into writing by inspired men, and is now extant among us in the books of holy scripture. Furthermore it was our Lord's design, that all who should embrace this religion of his should be united among themselves and with their head Christ Jesus, and so become one body by the means of one Holy Spirit which should actuate and influence them ; and this is that which the apostle saith, *There is one body and one Spirit.* They are therefore *one body*, because they are all acted and enlivened by *the same Spirit*, derived from the head Christ Jesus. And further, in the last place, it was our Lord's intention and design, that all believers, all that professed his religion, should be admitted to the participation of this Spirit, and so be made members of this common body, by the sacrament of baptism : and likewise that they should be continued and maintained in this membership, and receive continual influence from that same Spirit, by eating and drinking in the sacrament of the communion. And this is that which is told us in the text, that *we are all by one Spirit baptized into one body, and made to drink into one Spirit.*

Taking now these things along in our minds, we may easily form a true notion of the church ; that notion I am confident which the scripture meant to give us of it, when it speaks of the church as one. The church, according to these principles, can be nothing else but the whole multitude of those persons, whether Jews or Gentiles, that do embrace and profess the Christian religion, and are joined together by the means of the sacraments in one body or society under one head Christ Jesus. This, I say, is

the general notion of the church. But it will not be amiss, if I treat of this matter a little more particularly, that every body may fully understand the nature of that church which we all profess to believe, but yet are so much divided about. And I am confident we shall find enough in the holy scripture to satisfy all our scruples about this business.

The first time that our Saviour makes mention of his church, was before he had actually any church in the world; for he speaks of it as a thing future. It was upon St. Peter's public confession of him to be the Christ, the Son of God. Upon this, says our Saviour, *Verily I say unto thee, Thou art Peter; and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18. Afterwards, when he was leaving the world, and ascending up into heaven, he gives particular orders to his apostles about the building of this church which he had promised. And this was the commission he gave them: *Go*, says he, *and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

This commission of our Saviour we may properly enough style the charter of the church, and mind, I pray, what is contained in it. Our Saviour here declares the extent of his church, and of what persons he would have it constituted. It was to extend throughout all the world, and to be made up of all nations. He here declares by whom he would have

it built and constituted, viz. the apostles. He here declares upon what grounds he would have it constituted, or upon what conditions any person was to be received into it, viz. their becoming the disciples of Jesus Christ, and undertaking to observe all that he had commanded. He here likewise declares the form or the method by which persons were to be admitted into this church, and that was by being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and lastly, he here promises the perpetual presence of his Holy Spirit, both to assist the apostles and their successors in the building and governing this church, and to actuate and enliven all the members of it.

Well then, Christ, before he left the world, promised that a church should be built, and he gave a commission for the building of it. Let us now see how this promise was fulfilled, how this commission was executed, and how this church was actually built and constituted.

Now as to this, we find in the second chapter of the Acts, that in pursuance of a commission given to the apostles, they, with the rest of the disciples, met together at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and then and there did the Holy Spirit (as Christ had promised, ver. 1.) descend upon the apostles, and endued them with the power of speaking all languages, that so they might be enabled to execute their commission of preaching to all nations; and then and there did St. Peter, ver. 6. (to whom Christ had promised the honour of laying the foundation of this church for his so generous a confession of him;) then, I say, did St. Peter (ver. 14.) begin to preach the religion of Jesus Christ to the Jews, (as we find

he afterwards did to the Gentiles, Acts x.) exhorting them to *repent* and to embrace the Christian faith, and *to be baptized, every one of them, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of their sins*, ver. 38 : and the event of this sermon was, that they *who gladly received his words were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls*, ver. 41. The same chapter further tells us, that these being all added to the number of the disciples, *continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer*, ver. 42. And then it follows, that *the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*, ver. 47.

Here is the first time that we have mention in the New Testament of a church actually built and constituted ; and we see plainly, that that church was constituted by such officers, of such members, and with such rites and ceremonies as Christ had ordered in his general charter before spoken of. All those persons, of what different language or condition soever, that upon the apostles' preaching did embrace the Christian religion, and were baptized ; I say, all those, together with the apostles who preached and administered to them, made up *one church*. And they exercised this church-membership by an outward profession of the Christian religion, (which is there called *the apostles' doctrine*,) and by joining with the apostles in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, (which is there called *breaking of bread*,) and in public prayers. And to this church thus constituted were daily added others, till in process of time this church, thus inconsider-



able at first, grew to that bulk and those dimensions which we see it hath at this day.

It is true, the first apostolical church was not then styled by the name of catholic or universal church ; (I say catholic or universal, for both these words mean the same thing, the difference only being, that the one word is Greek and the other Latin ;) but it was simply called *the church*, or *the church of God*, without any other epithet. And there was good reason for this ; for this church, as you see, was at that time confined only within the walls of Jerusalem, and for some time after within the nation of the Jews ; but afterwards, when this church increased so that many cities and many nations were incorporated into it, each of which were properly churches of Christ, then, in contradistinction to those particular churches, came up the style and the title of the *catholic* or *universal* church. So that whenever we name or speak of the catholic church, we mean by that word the whole multitude of Christians throughout the world, that are embodied into one society under their head Christ Jesus, by baptism and the profession of the Christian faith, and the participation of the common means of salvation. But when we speak of a church of any single denomination, as the Greek church, the Ethiopic church, the Roman church, the church of England, and the like, we mean only some particular church, which is but a part of the church catholic or universal. The catholic church is but one, and can be but one ; because all the Christians in the world belong to it : and that is the church which we profess to believe in our creeds. But particular



churches are many, as many as the nations are that own and profess the Christian religion; nay, as many as are the dioceses into which Christian people are distributed under their several bishops. But yet all these churches, whether they be diocesan, or provincial, or national, they are all parts of the universal church, just as our several limbs and members are parts of our body.

Thus I am sure I have given you the true notion of the church which the scripture always intends when it mentions the church in general; when it speaks of the church as *the body of Christ*; when it speaks of the church *which Christ purchased with his blood*; when it speaks of the church *into which we are baptized*; when it speaks of the church to which all those glorious promises are made of the forgiveness of sins; of the perpetual presence and assistance of the Holy Spirit; of the gates of hell never prevailing against it; and of everlasting salvation in the world to come; I say, that church is always meant of the whole company of Christians dispersed over all the world, that profess the common faith, (though perhaps none of them without mixture of errors,) and enjoy the administration of the word and sacraments under their lawful pastors and governors: all these people, wherever they live, or by what name soever they call themselves, make up together that one body of Christ which we call *the catholic church*.

And thus having, as I hope, done something towards the fixing and settling the notion of the church, (so far as our text is concerned in it,) my next work is (before I dismiss this head) to make some reflections and remarks upon what has been

said with reference to several points which we have occasion given every day to hear of and to think of; and which it highly concerns us very well to satisfy ourselves about. The points which I think most natural, and at this time most needful to be treated of, with reference to this argument of the catholic church, are these that follow; which I choose to propose rather by way of inquiry, than by way of dogmatical assertion, that we may be the more fairly led to a just and equal discussion and examination of them.

And the first inquiry shall be this; Whether upon a true stating of the notion of the catholic church, (as I have endeavoured now to do it,) that question which the Romanists insist so much upon when they tamper with our people, and upon which they lay the main stress of their cause, viz. In which part of the world, or in which of the different communions of Christendom the only true church of Christ is to be found; I say, whether this question of theirs be not quite out of doors? whether it be not a very useless, impertinent question, as being grounded upon a false notion of the catholic church? a notion which is not only repugnant to the scriptures, but absurd in itself?

If they would draw all the matters in dispute between us into one point, and that point should be with relation to the church, the question upon which we were to join issue should not be put thus; Which of all the pretended churches is the true church? or, Which of all the divided communions of Christendom is that communion in which only we may have salvation? (for there are many true churches, and many communions in which salvation may be

had :) but this ; Which of all the several churches that are in the world is the most pure and orthodox? or, Which of all the several communions in Christendom is most agreeable to the laws of Christ, and in which a man may most safely, and with the least hazard, venture his salvation? Now if the question be thus put, we will join issue with them whensoever they please. But I forget, I am not now answering of questions, but proposing them.

In the second place, my next inquiry upon this argument should be this : Since they as well as we do allow, that baptism doth admit men into the catholic church, whether they be not obliged, upon their own principles, (owning our baptism to be valid, as they all do,) to acknowledge us of the church of England to be true members of the catholic church?

My third inquiry shall be this : Whether, by all the marks and tokens that are given of the church in the holy scriptures, the church of England may not be proved to be both a true and a sound part of the catholic church?

My fourth inquiry shall be this : Whether our charity to the church of Rome, in owning them to be a true church, whilst they are so uncharitable to deny us to be so, be any good argument that their communion is safer than ours?

My fifth inquiry shall be this : Whether there be any colour of reason, that the church of Rome, and they who adhere to her communion, should engross to themselves the name of the catholic church, or that they who are out of her communion should be thought no catholics?

My sixth inquiry shall be this : Allowing, as we do, churches of different communions to be parts of

the catholic church, and allowing Christians in those several churches to be capable of salvation, whether it can justly from thence be inferred, that it is an indifferent matter as to a man's salvation, what church or what communion he is of, so long as he is but of any one? and, whether every one is not bound, upon pain of damnation, to adhere to that church which he is convinced is most agreeable to the word of God; and to forbear communion with that church in which he cannot communicate without either professing to believe some things which he cannot believe, or practising some things which he is convinced God's laws have forbidden him?

These are all useful inquiries: and I shall hereafter, as I have opportunity, endeavour to give as plain an answer to them as I can.

In the mean time, consider what ye have heard, &c.

# A S E R M O N

ON

1 COR. XII. 13.

*For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

THE plain meaning of these words is (as I told you) this: the design of our baptism is, through the influence of the Spirit which is then given, to incorporate all believers in one society, of what nation or condition soever they be. They are all, by their being baptized, entered into Christ's church, and made one body; they become the members of Christ, and members one of another. And this, I say, is done by means of that one Spirit, which animates and enlivens that whole body, and gives strength and nourishment to every part of it.

And as this is the design of our baptism, so it is also the design of the other sacrament, wherein we partake of the cup of the Lord; for there also we *are made to drink into one Spirit*. Our eating of that bread and drinking of that cup, (he expresses only one of them, but he includes both,) I say, that is the means which Christ hath appointed for our receiving the continual influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the union which is between Christ and his members is preserved and maintained.

Three points I told you this text did fairly lead us to discourse upon; First, the number of the Christian sacraments, which seems here to be ad-

justed and ascertained ; and they are, baptism and the Lord's supper. Both these are here expressly mentioned ; but no other, neither in this text nor in any other passage in the New Testament ; nor do we find that the ancient fathers thought of any more ; nor doth it appear that any writer of the church, for eleven hundred years together, did ever give that precise number of the sacraments which the church of Rome now doth.

The second point to be insisted on from this text is, the unity of the catholic church into which we are baptized.

And the third point, the right that the laity have, by Christ's institution, and the apostles' practice, to the cup of the communion ; since it is plain by this text, that all the faithful did in the apostles' times drink into one Spirit, as well as eat into one Spirit.

The two former of these points I treated upon the last Lord's day ; and as for the first of them, I shall not repeat any thing of what I then said ; but as for the second, because I have not yet done with it, it is necessary that I give you some general account of the notion of the church and its unity, which I then endeavoured to establish ; that so you may the better go along with me as to those points wherein I shall be concerned at this time.

The sum of what I said concerning the church and its unity was this : that whenever we name or speak of the catholic church, (if we will take the scripture notion,) we must mean by that word the whole multitude of Christians throughout the world that are imbodyed into one society by baptism, and the profession of the Christian faith, and the participation of the common means of salva-



tion. But when we speak of a church of any single denomination, as the Greek church, the Ethiopic church, the Roman church, the English church, or the like, we mean only some particular church, which is but a part of the church catholic or universal. The catholic church is but one, and can be but one ; because all the Christians in the world do belong to it. But particular churches are many, as many as the nations are that own and profess the Christian religion ; nay, as many as are the dioceses into which Christian people are distributed under one bishop. But yet all these churches, whether they be diocesan, or provincial, or national, or patriarchal, they are all parts of the catholic church, just as our several limbs and members are parts of our body ; and, taken all together, they do make up that society which we are baptized into.

This I largely proved to be the true notion of the church which the scripture always speaks of, when it mentions the church in general ; when it speaks of the church as of *the body of Christ* ; when it speaks of the church *which Christ purchased with his blood* ; when it speaks of the church to which all those glorious promises are made of the perpetual presence and assistance of the Holy Spirit, and of the gates of hell never prevailing against it. I say, that church is always meant of the whole company of Christians dispersed over all the world, who profess the common faith, (though perhaps none of them without mixtures of error,) and enjoy the administration of the word and sacraments under their lawful pastors and governors. All these people, wherever they live, or by what name soever they style themselves, whether the church of Egypt or

Ethiopia ; whether of the eastern or western communion ; whether churches unreformed or churches of the reformation ; all these, singly and separately taken, are but parts of the catholic church ; but taken all together (as none of them are to be excluded) they do make up that one body, which the apostle in my text speaks of, when he saith, *we are all by one Spirit baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into one Spirit.*

And now, before I dismiss this argument, my design is to make some reflections upon, or to draw some inferences from what has been said concerning the church, with reference to some points that are debated hotly between us and the church of Rome.

And the first thing I shall insist upon is this : We may, from what has been said, be able, not only to give an answer to that question which the papists have continually in their mouths when they tamper with our people, viz. where that church is which we profess to believe in our Creed, but also to discern how utterly impertinent that question is to their purpose, notwithstanding the great stress they lay upon it.

The usual method, when they would seduce any from our church, is this : they will tell you, that Christ can have but one church here upon earth. If you acknowledge this, as you certainly must, they will tell you that you need not trouble yourself with entering into that ocean of particular disputes which are between the protestants and them, when the main, and in truth the only question is, where that church is which we profess to believe in the two Creeds ? You declare there to believe one catholic and apostolic church ; and you

own likewise, that out of that church there is no ordinary means of salvation : what need now have you to trouble yourself about any more, than merely to satisfy yourself in which of the communions of Christendom this church is to be found, and having, found it, to join yourself to it ?

I must needs say, that the waving all other disputes, and putting the controversy upon this issue, is a very compendious way, and will save you a world of trouble, which otherwise you must necessarily undergo, in common methods of inquiring into and coming to the knowledge of the truth. For if you can but satisfy yourself, as they would have you, about the true church, (which is their church,) they will take care to satisfy you about all other things, whether you will or no. For after this dispute is over, you are not permitted to dispute any more, because having found the true church, you have found an infallible one, and if the church be infallible, you must be concluded by her determinations in all matters whatsoever.

Well, but let us examine what great weight and moment there is in this question, that the being satisfied about it should put an end to all other particular disputes. Methinks this question is just such another question as this : Since there is but one city of London, but abundance of streets and lanes and alleys in it, some of which are well built, others ruinous, and ready to tumble ; some are healthful, and free from contagious distempers, others perhaps are visited with the plague ; now in which of all these streets, lanes, and alleys is the true city of London to be found ? Why sure any man in his wits will think this an idle question : for whatever

difference there is as to those particular places, upon account of some of them being much more safe than others, and some of them more convenient or more uniform than others ; yet they are all of them parts of the same city, but none of them, singly taken, is that city. Now just such an answer as this is to be given to the question before us. The question is, where that church is to be found which we profess to believe in our creeds ? To this question we give a plain answer from the principles we have before laid down. That church which we believe in our creeds is the catholic or universal church of Christ, into which all Christians are baptized : and therefore, being thus catholic or universal, it is not to be confined to England, or to the reformation abroad ; it is not to be confined to Rome, or those of her communion ; it is not to be confined to Greece, to Syria, to Armenia, to the East Indies, to Ethiopia, to Egypt ; but it is in all these places, because in all these places there are Christians professing the common faith of Christ, and partaking of the same common sacraments under their lawful pastors and governors ; though yet, in communion, many of them are divided one from another. So that in all these places, and in every place under heaven, where there are such people, there is a true church of Christ, but not the whole church of Christ, because the whole church, which we call the catholic church, is made up of all those churches. Only this it is fit we should take notice of, that though in all these places the church is to be found, yet the church, or that part of the church, which is found in some of those places, is far more pure and holy and apostolical than it is in other places. And in all the countries where the church

may be said to be, those where the faith is professed according to the church of Rome have the greatest mixture of errors and corruptions.

And now let any man judge, whether there be any such extraordinary feats to be done by this question as they would bear us in hand; nay, whether it be not wholly impertinent to our business. For you see that, notwithstanding this question is answered, yet all the particular disputes between us and the church of Rome are yet unsettled; and we are at as great a distance from them as ever. Notwithstanding we are willing to own them to be truly a church, (as we do all the eastern and western churches,) yet still we dare not communicate with them; still our complaints remain against their usurpations, against their imposing God knows how many new doctrines for articles of faith, which the scriptures and the primitive church never taught; against their worship of images, and invocation of saints; of having the public service of God in an unknown tongue, and depriving the people of half of the sacrament; and other such things. We say, they are truly a church, that is, a part of the catholic church, because we think they retain all the fundamentals of the Christian religion, both as to doctrine, and sacraments, and government. But yet we cannot be of their communion, unless they will either withdraw their unlawful, unscriptural impositions from being terms of their communion, or satisfy us (which they never can do any intelligent man) that these new things, which they impose, and we except against, are really agreeable to the word of God. So that you see the ocean of disputes must be sailed through, or else we can never come to an harbour.



But it will perhaps be insisted on, as I know it is by the pretended catholics, how is it possible that there should be but one church, (as there is but one, by the acknowledgment of all,) and yet so many different communions among those that pretend to be of that church? Can all these people, thus divided and separated, belong to that one body of Christ? No, certainly; it is but one of all those communions that can be the true church.

To this I answer: It were heartily to be wished that all who profess the Christian religion were of one communion, as they were at first. And sure I am, it is the duty of every particular man, and of every particular church, to endeavour it, as much as it is possible, without violating faith and a good conscience. And woe be to them who have been the cause or the occasion of such dismal rents and schisms as are to be seen at this day in the Christian world! but yet, notwithstanding, there is no reason to be assigned why churches of different communions may not, for all that, remain truly parts of the catholic church, so long as they have those essentials of a church which I have so often named. I grant indeed, that so long as these divisions and separations do remain, there is a criminal schism lies at the door of some party or other: for certainly by Christ's laws the whole catholic church should be of one communion; and ecclesiastical affairs should be so administered among all people and languages, that every honest man, when he had occasion to travel from one country into another, even to the remotest parts of Christendom, might readily, with a good conscience, join in public prayers and sacraments with that Christian congregation which



he found upon the place. So that, as the state of Christendom now stands, we must needs acknowledge there is an horrible schism, and hath been for many ages, among the churches; nay, perhaps there may be more churches than one that are guilty of this schism in some degree or other. But still, I say, these schismatical churches are yet parts of the catholic church, though very corrupt and degenerate ones; their schism doth no more cut them off from being members of Christ's kingdom (so long as they do hold to the foundation) than, for instance, if it should happen in England that two families, or two parishes, or two counties should quarrel among themselves, and that quarrel should proceed so far as that they should refuse all mutual commerce and intercourse, should be inhospitable one towards another, and break the king's peace whenever they met one with another; I say, the schism in the former case will no more cut off the churches concerned from being members of Christ's kingdom, so long as they retain the faith and worship of Christ Jesus, than the quarrel or breach of peace in the latter case will cut off those people from being the king of England's subjects, or from being members of his kingdom, so long as they profess to bear faith and true allegiance to his majesty, and own his laws and government.

It is a plain case that there were separations and schisms and different communions even in the most primitive times of Christianity: witness that great schism that happened in the church of Corinth, which occasioned two famous Epistles, one from St. Paul, another from St. Clement, to that church. But yet not a word in either of these Epistles that the schis-

matics were no Christians, or out of the pale of the church.

Within two hundred years after Christ, there arose a notorious schism between the eastern and the Latin churches about the time of celebrating Easter. And there the pope of Rome (as they have always been ready at such turns) excommunicated the churches of Asia for disagreeing with them about that point. Here now the catholic church was divided into two communions ; but will any man in his wits say, that either of those communions was cut off from the catholic church, when at that time there was in both of them so many glorious martyrs and confessors ? But if either of them did forfeit their title of being catholics, it will be easily guessed which of them it was : for certainly the Asiatic churches were in no fault, since they did but observe their ancient usage ; but it was the Roman church that was the schismatic, in so groundlessly excommunicating them.

But then I have this further to add upon this point, that though, as you see, we do assert that churches of different communions may, for all that, belong to the true catholic church, yet it is not for the serving our own cause that we do assert this. The church of England doth not need this hypothesis for the justifying herself to all the world ; but we take this hypothesis, and say all this out of the great charity and tenderness we have to the church of Rome, and those other great bodies that differ both from them and us, though much more from them than they do from us. But if indeed it should prove true, which the pretended catholics of Rome so much contend for, viz. that among all the dif-

ferent communions in Christendom there can but one of those communions be the true church, and all the rest are out of the catholic church; I say, if this should be true, I declare that if I had yet my communion to choose, of all the communions in Christendom which have the face of a church, the communion of the church of Rome, as it is now established, should be the last that I should join myself to: and my reason is, that if either heresy or schism destroy a church, and cut off the members of it from the body of Christ, I should more suspect that communion upon both these accounts than any other. As for heresy, the notion of it is not so fully agreed upon: but if it be heresy to teach doctrines of religion that are not true, and practices in religion that are not safe; (to give it the most favourable term we can;) if it be heresy to declare new articles of faith as necessary to salvation, which neither Christ, nor his apostles, nor the primitive church ever declared as such; then I fear the Roman church hath gone as far towards the making herself guilty of heresy as any of the several communions of Christendom, even the most erroneous of them. But as for schism, she hath gone a great way further: we are all agreed that schism is an unnecessary, causeless separation from a church with which we were bound to communicate. Taking it now for granted, that all the churches in the world are bound to be of one communion, yet, if separations do happen, (as God knows there are abundance,) that church only is guilty of schism which is the cause and occasion of that separation. If we desire to communicate with all churches upon the gospel-terms, but some churches will not let us communicate with

them upon those terms, but impose other terms which the laws of the gospel doth not allow; here is indeed a schism, and a rent between these churches: but which of them is the schismatic? Certainly not we, that would own them as brethren, and join with them in prayer and sacraments; but they, that will not let us join with them but upon such terms as we cannot with a safe conscience submit to.

And this, I fear, is the case between the church of Rome and those other churches that are of a different communion. The church of Rome, taking in all the kingdoms and nations that adhere to her at this day, is not by all computation above one fourth part (if so much) of that company of men which profess the faith of Christ, and have the sacraments, and all other essentials of a church. Yet all those churches are divided from her. Here now is a schism, and a fearful one: but the question is, at whose door the sin lies? Why truly, it is to be feared, that church which hath imposed new terms of communion which were never heard of in the primitive times; that church which, taking advantages of the smallness of some churches, and the distresses of others, hath erected an universal monarchy over the Christian world, and instead of contenting herself with being a part of the catholic church, will needs be the whole, and excommunicate all those that refuse to yield obedience to the bishop of Rome, as the vicar of Christ, and the only visible head of the church; I say, this usurping, monopolizing church is, in all reason, the schismatic; and not those other churches that are shut out of her communion.

Well, but there is one argument goes about, which, notwithstanding all we have said, doth irrefragably

prove, that the church of Rome, and no other, is that true, visible church that Christ is to have always upon earth.

I have met with it in a little manuscript paper; and it is said to have done some feats. I will speak two or three words to it, and so conclude this point.

The argument is this: “ If you deny the church  
“ of Rome to be the only true, visible church, then  
“ I desire that you will be pleased to shew me a vi-  
“ sible church opposing the church of Rome in those  
“ doctrines wherein you differ from them, and prac-  
“ tising in those points as the church of England  
“ doth, from the time of Christ till the reformation.  
“ For if there was any time wherein there was no  
“ Christian church but that in communion with the  
“ see of Rome, it must, I conceive, be granted, that  
“ that is the true church, or that Christ had no vi-  
“ sible one upon earth.”

This is the paper, word for word, leaving out the preface, about which we have no controversy; and the force of it lies in these two points: “ We cannot  
“ shew a visible church that hath, from Christ’s time  
“ to the reformation, opposed the church of Rome  
“ in those doctrines and practices wherein we differ  
“ from her; and there was a time when all Chris-  
“ tian churches were in communion with the church  
“ of Rome.” The conclusion from hence is, That therefore the present church of Rome is the only true church of Christ upon earth.

This is as surprising a conclusion from such premises, as can enter into the mind of a man. First of all, we cannot shew a visible church that hath, from Christ’s time to the reformation, opposed the church of Rome in her pretences; therefore the



church of Rome is the only true church. Why, supposing that all the churches of the world had, from Christ's time to this, agreed with the church of Rome in all points both of doctrine and practice, yet doth it from thence follow that the church of Rome is the only visible church? No, not in the least; she is still but a part of the visible church, and the other churches that agree with her are as much parts of it as she. And if this be so, how can it in the least follow, that when churches are divided from her both in doctrine and practice, she is any more the whole visible church than they? Why are not they as much the visible church after they are divided as they were before, supposing it was her fault, and not theirs, that occasioned this division and separation? and if the visible church can be but in one communion, why are not those churches that are separated from the church of Rome the only true catholic visible church, and the church of Rome no part of it at all, since it appears that in this case it is she that hath caused the schism?

But that I may fully expose the sophistry of this argument to the meanest understanding, and enable every one to give an answer to it, I will put the whole force of it into an obvious case.

The argument is, that if we cannot shew a visible church distinct from the Roman, that hath in all times from the beginning opposed the doctrines and practices of the present church of Rome, then it will undeniably follow, that the present church of Rome is the only visible church.

Why now, methinks, this is just such an argument as this:

A father bequeathes a large estate among his



children, and their children after them. They do for some generations quietly and peaceably enjoy their several shares without disturbance from each other. At last one branch of this family (and not of the eldest house neither) starts up, and being of greater power than the rest, and having got some of the same family to join with him, very impudently challengeth the whole estate to himself, and those that adhere to him; and would dispossess all the rest of the descendants, accounting them no better than bastards, though they be far more in number than his own party, and have a far greater share in the inheritance. Upon this they contest their own right against him, alleging their father's will and testament, and their long possession, and that they are all lawfully descended from their first common ancestor.

But this gentleman, who would lord it over his brethren, offers this irrefragable argument for the justice of his claim: If, saith he, you deny me and my adherents to be the sole proprietors of this estate, then it lies upon you to shew, that ever since the death of our progenitor, who left us this estate, there hath appeared some of the family who have always opposed my claim to this estate: but that you cannot shew; and therefore I have an undoubted title to the whole estate; I am lord of the whole inheritance.

I do appeal to any man living, whether this plea would pass in any court of judicature; nay, whether any private man, though never so unlearned, can believe that this insolent pretender doth offer any fair reason for the disseising the coheirs of their inheritance. And yet this is just the argument with which those learned gentlemen would persuade us

to give up our birthright, to depart from that share of the inheritance we have in the catholic church.

Well, but what will the coheirs that are concerned say to this argument? Why, there are three things so obvious to be said to it, that if the persons concerned have not the wit to hit upon them, they are fit to come under the custody and guardianship of this pretended heir-general. May they not say to this gentleman that makes so universal a claim, Sir, your claim was not so early as the death of our forefather who left us this joint inheritance. Your ancestors and ours lived a great while peaceably together, without any clashing about this estate, and we were suffered for some ages to enjoy our own right, without any molestation from you or those you derive from; and, the case being so, there was no need of opposing your pretences, because you made none. But then, (which is the second thing,) when you did set up for this principality, and wheedled some of our family, and forced others to join with you, you know you were presently opposed by others of our family, who would not so easily part from their rights. You know, that as soon as ever you made your claim, there were some that stoutly declared against it, though they had not power and strength and interest enough in the world to stem the torrent of your ambition.

But then, thirdly, may they say, Supposing it was not so; supposing you had met with no rub in your pretences; (which yet you know you did;) supposing our family were not so suddenly aware of the mischief that would come upon them from those your usurpations, as to make a present opposition; doth it now follow, that because no opposition was

just then made to your pretences, that therefore your pretensions to the whole estate are justifiable? No, we can prove they are not so; for it is plain by the testament, by the settlement of our common father, that we have as much a right to our parts in this estate as you have, or as your ancestors ever had. Tell not us that you were not at first, or that you were not always opposed in your claim: but tell us by what right or justice you can pretend to be the sole lord of this inheritance. Let the will of our common parent be produced, and that will plainly shew that we have as much a share in this estate as you have.

This allegory is so pat to our business, and the application of it so easy to our present case, that I think I should injure the most vulgar understanding, if I should suspect his ability to make that use of it which I intend.

And then, fourthly, as for the other thing which the paper uses as an argument of the church of Rome being the only visible church, namely this, “That if there was any time wherein there was no Christian church but that in communion with the see of Rome, it must be granted that that is the true church,” meaning the only true church: I say, if this be any argument, it will prove a great deal more than the author of the paper would have it. For it will prove as strongly, that the British church here in this nation is the only visible church of Christ, or that the church of Constantinople is the only church of Christ, or that the church of Alexandria in Egypt is the only church of Christ, as it will prove that the church of Rome is the only church of Christ. For if there was any time where-

in there was no Christian church but what was in communion with the British church, then, according to this argument, it must be granted, that the British church is the only true church. If there was a time wherein there was no Christian church but what was in communion with the see of Constantinople, then it must be granted that the Greek church, under the patriarch of Constantinople, is the only true, visible church of Christ; and so it may be carried on as to the church of Alexandria, and several other churches yet in being. For whenever that time was, when all those churches were in communion with all other churches, (as I believe it was in the primitive times of Christianity,) I think it is evident that the church of Rome was as much in communion with the British churches as the British churches were in communion with the see of Rome; and so as to all the rest. If now the British churches, and all other churches, being once in communion with the church of Rome, be a good argument that the church of Rome is the only true church, then sure the church of Rome, and all other churches, being once in communion with the British church, is as good an argument that the British church, and we of the church of England that are now come in their place, are the only true church. And this, in truth, is all that they get by this argument.

But we are not so arrogant as to pretend to be the only true church of Christ, though I am sure, all things considered, we have more reason to do so than they. But we are contented to be a part of the catholic visible church; and we wish they would be so too. And we have this comfort, that we can say we are a sound part of the catholic church, which we

heartily wish we could say of them ; but to our grief we cannot.

I am sensible I have made a long and a tedious discourse about this business of the church : but I thought it needful to do it, (having so fair an occasion given me by my text,) that I might furnish you with answers to those people who are so continually talking about the church, the true church, the one visible church, out of which there is no salvation. This I am sure of, and I conclude with it : So long as you continue in our communion, you are in the communion of the true church of Christ, and in an infinitely safer communion than if you were in theirs. I dare answer for the salvation of all those who, continuing in our church, do live up to the principles of it ; but I dare answer nothing for them who, being brought up in this church, and having so great opportunities given them of knowing the truth, do yet depart from it. I pray God they may be able to answer for themselves.

I pray God make us all honest and wise ; and then I am sure, as to our principles, we shall continue the same we are now, but as to our lives and conversations we shall grow much better.

May God of his infinite mercy grant this to us for the sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.

This being the Sermon that gave occasion to the king's mandatory letter to the Bp. of London to suspend Dr. Sharpe ; and the bishop having advised him to forbear preaching till his majesty's displeasure was removed ; he was prevented from proceeding any further in the examination of those other five queries which he had proposed at the end of the former Sermon, so that we have no more of his conclusion from this text.

# A S E R M O N

ON

## PROVERBS XXVIII. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth them and forsaketh them shall find mercy.*

**T**HESE words contain a very full, though a very short description (and by how much the shorter, so much, I think, the better) of true repentance; such a repentance as God would accept: and that, first, negatively, in what it doth not consist, or rather is not consistent with it; and that in the former part of the verse; *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper*: and, secondly, positively, in what it doth consist; and that in these two things, confessing our sins and forsaking them; *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.*

Repentance, however it may appear to some as a single duty, yet in truth it is one full half of all that the gospel requires of us. For the whole condition of the new covenant is comprised in these two things; viz. *repentance towards God*, and *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*; as the apostle has declared, Acts xx. 21.

It must therefore be of infinite consequence, that we all be rightly instructed in the nature of repentance, since there is so great stress laid upon it. If we take false measures in this point, it is as much as our souls are worth. And yet, as things go in the world, though nothing be more plainly and fully declared in the holy scriptures than the nature of this



repentance, as to all the branches of it ; so that no man of but tolerable parts, that will bring an honest mind along with him, can easily miss of rightly informing himself from thence of all that he is concerned to know about this duty ; yet, I say, as matters now stand, there is scarce any doctrine of religion more obscured, more misrepresented, more distorted and corrupted, even to the great peril of the souls of men, than this doctrine of repentance is.

Some men there are, who, for the advancing the authority of the clergy, and the more fully establishing their empire over the consciences of men, as likewise for the enriching themselves by other men's sins, and at the same time making the consciences of those that pay for it as easy and as quiet as may be ; I say, they have found out God knows how many devices as to this business of repentance which the writers of the scripture never knew of ; nay, which indeed are directly contrary to their sense and meaning. And such devices they are too, that at the same time they both perplex the consciences of the more scrupulous sort of men, and also give too much encouragement to the vices and excesses of those that are loosely given.

The Wise Man here in the text tells us, that *whoso confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall find mercy*. This is both plain enough, and home enough ; and this same notion of repentance is all along inculcated both in the Old and New Testament ; and no other but this. Every where a contrite confession of our sins to God, and a forsaking them, are thought enough to denominate a sinner a true penitent, and to entitle him to the mercies of God. And, on the other side, whoever doth not come up

to this, whoever doth not both these, is not qualified for God's mercies ; the one without the other will not be sufficient. If a man confess, but doth not forsake, his sins are yet upon him ; he is not in the state of a true penitent. On the other side, though a man do forsake his sins, if he do not confess them, (which indeed it is hardly to be supposed that a man can do,) yet still his repentance is imperfect. It is not that repentance to which God, in his revelations to mankind, has made any promise of mercy and forgiveness. Both these things therefore are necessary, and where they do concur, they are all that is necessary.

But now the present doctrines of the church of Rome concerning this matter of repentance are quite of another strain, as will appear by these three of them, which I shall take occasion from my text to examine.

1. First of all, they teach, that a man is not only to confess his sins to God, but he is bound to confess them also to a priest ; otherwise they will not be forgiven him. And when he doth thus make his confession, he is bound to discover, not only all his mortal sins, that upon strict examination of himself he can remember, but also the circumstances of them.

2. Secondly, whereas it is here said, that *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall*, without more ado, *find mercy*, that is, his sins shall be forgiven him, they teach quite otherwise : for a man, according to them, may confess his sins and forsake them too, and yet they shall not be forgiven him, unless he make satisfaction for them over and above. They grant indeed, that upon his confession to a

priest, and receiving absolution from him, the eternal punishment due to his sins is remitted ; but yet there is a very terrible temporal punishment to be undergone, either in this life or the next ; which punishment the sinner cannot be freed from, unless he either in his own person, or some other for him, do make a complete satisfaction to the divine justice.

3. Thirdly, whereas by the words of our text one would think, that *forsaking of sin* was as necessary to the *finding mercy* as *confession*, and that one without the other would not be available for the procuring any man's pardon, they teach quite otherwise ; (if not directly, yet by consequence ;) for, according to their definitions, if a man do but devoutly and contritely confess to a priest, and receive his absolution, he is presently put into the state of God's favour, so far as that he shall not suffer eternally for his sins, but at last go to heaven ; though in the mean time he do not forsake his sins till his dying day : though, as I said before, if he have not made satisfaction, he must for a long time be kept in purgatory.

These are the popish corruptions and innovations in this matter of repentance that we all complain of, and think we have just reason so to do. And these opinions and doctrines are not only taught by private men among them, but are partly the express definitions of their general council of Trent, (which, with them, is authority never to be opposed and contradicted,) and partly they are the undeniable consequences and results of what they have there decreed and declared concerning the sacrament of penance.

Of these three points I come to give an account : and I begin with their doctrine of confession, which I am the more desirous to insist upon, because really several among ourselves are apt enough to think that the church of Rome hath the advantage of us in this matter. And it is made a pretence by some, why they have left our communion, viz. that in our church they want the benefit of private confession, which in the church of Rome is strictly enjoined.

Now my business is to lay this matter plainly before you, to state both their doctrine and ours in this point of confession ; and then, I dare say, it will easily appear which church is to be preferred upon this account.

1. First then I shall shew, how far we of the reformed religion do allow of confession of sins unto men.

2. Secondly, what that doctrine of the church of Rome is, that we find fault with in this matter, and for what reasons it is justly blameable.

1. First then, I shall plainly lay before you what it is we teach as to this matter of confessing sins to men, whether priests or others. All the sins that can be confessed will fall under some of these three heads : they are either such whereby God is offended, and he only ; or they are such whereby some particular man is injured, as well as God offended ; or, lastly, they are such whereby scandal is given to the public society of Christians where we live, though no particular man be injured by them.

Now as to each of these kinds of sins, let us examine what confession to men is due.

1. And, first of all, there is no doubt but that as to all these sins that come under the second head I

have named, that is to say, all those things whereby we have offended or injured our particular neighbours ; there is no doubt, I say, that we are not only bound to confess them to God, as being transgressors of his law, but bound likewise to make satisfaction to our neighbours for the injury we have done to them by them. And that both by a penitential confession and acknowledgment of them, and, if that be not sufficient, by making such further reparations as the case requires. This we are bound to do by the natural laws of justice and equity ; and our Saviour hath sufficiently intimated his pleasure as to this in that precept of his ; *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy ways, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift*, Matt. v. 23, 24. In which words he plainly teaches us, that it is not enough, when we have offended or affronted any person, to go and ask God forgiveness for it, but we are to go and reconcile ourselves to him, by acknowledging our faults, and making all such reparations as the injury requires ; otherwise we are no ways capable of making our prayers to God for his forgiveness. O that we would all seriously think on this ! if we did, it would not be possible for us to offer the least provocation, or to do the least injury to any man in the world. Or if we were so foolish, or so unhappy as to do it, we should not be able to take any rest, till we had made him satisfaction. For I account no man can be able to rest quietly, who is not in a condition to say his prayers.

2. But, secondly, as to all those sins which come under the third head I mentioned, viz. sins which,



though they do not injure any particular person, yet injure the public society of Christians, are an affront to the religion we profess, and give scandal to the church; as to these sins, I say, not only our church, but all other protestant churches, do not only allow, but approve of confession unto men, even a public confession, a confession as open as the sins committed were. For instance, if any man deny the faith of Christ, or go over to an heretical communion; or, lastly, live in the open practice of any sin or sins that are notoriously repugnant to the laws of Christ's religion; such sins as St. Paul instanceth in, when he directs the Corinthians, that *if any man who is called a brother* (that is, a Christian) *be a fornicator, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one no not so much as to eat*, 1 Cor. v. 11: as to such persons as these, I say, there is no protestant church but doth highly approve that a public confession should be made in the face of the church of those crimes by every penitent; that by this means satisfaction might be made to the Christian society which was scandalized, and the offending party may, as much as in him lies, undo all the mischief which his bad example had done to his fellow Christians.

And this indeed was the ancient practice of the church of Christ in the primitive times. Such a course was always then taken with scandalous offenders. If a man was a known evil liver, if upon admonition he did not reform his life, he was, without more ado, cast out of the communion of the faithful; and there was no way to obtain his readmission but by a repentance as public as his sin was. Nay, in those days the offending Christians,



who had their hearts disposed for repentance, were as forward of themselves to make this public confession, and to right the Christian society they had injured, as the church was to require it of them.

And this is that confession we so often read of in ecclesiastical writers, and which they so much urge as of necessity to repentance, viz. a public confession of crimes, not that private whispering of sins into the ear of a confessor, which the church of Rome hath now brought into the place of it.

It is true, there is little of this to be seen in our times : a few footsteps are left of the ancient ecclesiastical discipline, and that is all : whether ever it will be restored or no, God only knows ; but it is the wish and the prayer of all good men that it may be. Popery first corrupted the discipline of the church ; and happy had it been for us, if when our first reformers took so much care to reduce doctrines of faith to the primitive standard, they had done the same as to our discipline : but perhaps it was not in their power. They sufficiently discover their goodwill to it, in the preface of the Communion-office ; where, having mentioned that “ there was a godly  
“ discipline in the primitive church ; that such persons  
“ as stood convicted of notorious sins were put to  
“ open penance, and punished in this world, that  
“ their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord ;  
“ and that others, admonished by their examples,  
“ might be more afraid to offend ;” they add in the next sentence, “ that it is heartily to be wished that  
“ this discipline may be restored.” But till that be done, we must use such methods for bringing men to repentance as we can.

3. But, thirdly, all protestants that I know of do

not only require acknowledgment and confession of injuries to the injured person, as necessary to repentance, and approve of public confession of public sins in the face of the church, but even as to private sins, whereby no particular man nor no society is injured, but only God offended; (which is the third sort of sins that I mentioned in the first place;) I say, as to these, they not only allow of, but approve of confession to men, even private confession to men; and more especially such confession as is made to those who are ministers. No one protestant, so far as we can judge by the public declarations of their faith, is against private confession of sins to any good man, much less to a minister or pastor. Nay, they are so far from being against it, that they advise it, and recommend it in sundry cases, as a most excellent instrument of repentance.

So that the papists do very unjustly traduce and calumniate the reformation when they say that the protestants are against private confession; there is no such thing. There is no protestant church but gives it that due esteem and regard that it ought to have. All that they have done is to regulate it, to set it upon its true basis and foundation; which is done, not by requiring private confession as a thing necessary, but by exhorting men to it as a thing highly convenient in many cases. In all those instances where it can be useful, or serve any good purpose, it is both commended and seriously advised; that is to say, where a sinner either needs direction and assistance for the overcoming some sin that he labours under; or where he is so overwhelmed with the burden of his sins, that he needs the help of some skilful person to explain to him the terms of the

gospel, to convince him from the holy scriptures that his repentance (as far as a judgment can be made of it) is true and sincere, and will be accepted by God ; and, lastly, upon the full examination of his state, and his judgment thereupon, to give him the absolution of the church. In all these cases, no protestant (that understands his religion) is against private confession : on the contrary, all the best writers of the protestants, nay, all the public confessions of the protestants, (which give an account of their faith,) are mightily for it, and do seriously recommend it. Mr. Calvin hath fully expressed their sense as to this point.

“ Let every faithful Christian,” says he, “ remember, that when he is burdened and afflicted with the sense of his sins, that he cannot ease himself without the help of others, it is then his duty not to neglect that remedy which the Lord hath prescribed to him, viz. that, for the easing of himself, he resort to private confession with his pastor ; and that, for the gaining comfort to himself, he fetch in the assistance of him whose office it is, both privately and publicly, to comfort the people of God by the doctrine of the gospel. But yet this moderation is always to be used, that, where God hath not laid impositions, we should not lay impositions on our own consciences. Hence it follows, that this private confession ought to be free, and should not be required of all, but only recommended to those who find they have need of it.” Thus far Mr. Calvin ; and in the same place where he doth thus recommend private confessions doth he also speak great things of the benefits of private absolution, in order to the easing and comforting afflicted consciences.

And this sense of his is the general sense of the

protestants abroad. If there be any difference among them, it is, that the Lutherans are more strict in requiring private confession than either the French or Dutch protestants are.

As for our own church, she has directly given her judgment in the matter, as we have now represented, viz. in the public exhortation which is to be read when notice is given of a communion. There it is advised, “ That if there be any of the congregation “ that cannot by other means quiet his own conscience, but requireth comfort or counsel; then he “ should come to some discreet and learned minister “ of God’s word, and open his grief; that by the “ ministry of God’s holy word he may receive the “ benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, “ and avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness.”

This is the doctrine of the protestants concerning confession; and this I think may be justified to all the world.

II. But the popish doctrine in this matter is quite of another strain, and serves to quite different purposes: which what it is, and upon what grounds we find fault with it, I come in the second place to shew.

The church of Rome, you are to know, have made repentance to be a sacrament, viz. the sacrament by which only sins committed after baptism are to be forgiven. And of this sacrament of repentance they have made three parts; 1. contrition for sin; 2. confession to a priest; 3. satisfaction. Whoever performs these three things, upon the priest’s absolution, his sins are forgiven. And all these three conditions, say they, are necessary to the obtaining pardon and reconciliation.

By *confession*, they mean not confession to God, nor confession to our neighbour in case of injuries, nor confession to the church in case of public, notorious sin, but private confession to a priest, which is that they call *auricular confession*, because it is whispered into his ear. This is that confession they make a necessary part of repentance, and without which (supposing we have opportunity) sin is not forgiven.

I will give you their sense (as near as I can translate) in the words of two of their general councils which have established it as a law among them. The first is, the council of Lateran. There it is ordered, “ That every man and woman, after they come to  
“ years of discretion, should faithfully confess all  
“ their sins privately to their own priest, at least  
“ once in the year, and endeavour faithfully to perform the penance that is enjoined them ; and after  
“ this they should come to the sacrament, at least  
“ at Easter, unless the priest, upon some reasonable  
“ cause, do judge it fit for them to abstain at that  
“ time. And whoever doth not perform this, he is  
“ to be excommunicated out of the church ; and, if  
“ he die, he is not to be allowed Christian burial.” Thus the council of Lateran, very modestly ! But the council of Trent goes much further, and clincheth the business as effectually as is possible ; for they decree, that “ whoever shall affirm that this private  
“ confession to a priest was not instituted by Christ,  
“ and is by divine right necessary to salvation, let  
“ him be accursed.” The same council orders, that  
“ all mortal sins which a man, after diligent examination of himself, finds his conscience to be burdened with, even those that are most secret, though



“ they be only in thought or desire, even all these  
“ are to be repeated to the priest in confession ; and  
“ not only the sins themselves, but also the circum-  
“ stances of them, that may change the kind of the  
“ sin.” And to bind this the faster upon the consciences of men, they have made this decree, that  
“ whosoever shall say that in the sacrament of pen-  
“ nance it is not by divine law necessary for the ob-  
“ taining forgiveness, to confess all and every mortal  
“ sin which, after a diligent inquiry, a man can re-  
“ member, even the most secret, together with the  
“ circumstances that change the kind of the sin ; or  
“ shall say that such confession is only of use for the  
“ directing or comforting the penitent, but is not ne-  
“ cessary, let every such man be accursed.”

This is the plain, avowed doctrine of the present church of Rome as to confession. But we say it is a great error introduced into the doctrine of repentance, and of very ill consequence to the souls of men, as will appear by these three following things, which I shall very briefly represent.

1. First, they here make a thing to be of Christ's institution, and of necessity to salvation, that hath no manner of foundation in the holy scriptures, either in the Old or New Testament.

If they could but produce one text of the Bible, wherein it did appear that this auricular, sacramental confession of sins to a priest was recommended, either by our Lord or his apostles ; or one text, wherein it did appear that it was practised by any Christian, either of the clergy or laity, in any instance ; or, lastly, one text, whereby it doth appear that it was so much as mentioned or thought on by the holy men of that time ; I say, if they could produce any



one text of scripture for the proof of any of these things, they would do something: but we are sure they cannot. And therefore to impose private confession, as a necessary condition of repentance, upon all the Christian world, under pain of damnation, that is intolerable. One text there is indeed they make a great noise with, and it looks, at first sight, plausibly to their purpose; but upon examination it will be found nothing at all to their purpose. It is in the fifth chapter of St. James's Epistle, where the apostle hath this passage; *Confess*, says he, *your sins one to another, that ye may be healed: for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

But, first of all, it can never be made appear that the confession which St. James here prescribes is to be understood of private confession to a priest; nay, on the contrary, it is manifest from the very words, that the apostle speaks of such a confession as is mutual and reciprocal; *Confess your sins one to another.* Which speech intimates, that both parties are to confess; both the confessor and the confessed: but now it is not the usage of the church for the confessors to confess to the people who confess to them. Furthermore, it is undeniably plain, that the apostle doth not here speak of the sacramental confession of the church of Rome, upon this account; that the end for which he recommendeth confession to one another is only this, that by the prayers of one another *they may be healed* of their sickness, (whether those sicknesses be the diseases of the soul or of the body it matters not,) for it immediately follows, *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

But what is this to the popish confession? The end of that is not so much to get cured either of our sins or our sicknesses by the prayers of him we confess to; but to obtain the pardon of our sins, by receiving his absolution; which is quite another thing. But to proceed further: As there is in scripture no command, no practice, no mention of this sacramental, private confession, so there is much against it. For the scripture plainly prescribes other terms of forgiveness of sins, and assures us of pardon and the mercy of God merely upon our confessing to God, and forsaking our sins, without any more ado. David certainly never dreamed of the necessity of auricular confession, when he spake these words in the thirty-second Psalm, and the fifth verse: *I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquities have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sin unto the Lord; and, lo! thou forgavest me the iniquity of my sin.* Upon his confessing his sins to the Lord above, his sin was forgiven. And, lest we should think that this was an extraordinary privilege vouchsafed unto him, and such a one as others were not to expect, he adds further, *For this cause shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto thee in an acceptable time*, ver. 6. To the same purpose St. John; *If we confess our sins*, (meaning to God, for to him the whole context restraineth it,) *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, 1 Ep. i. 9. And thus again, if we can gather any thing from any parable of our Saviour's, we may certainly gather this from the parable he makes of the publican and pharisee that *went together into the temple to pray*, that, in order to the forgiveness of sins, God

requires no more than an humble, sorrowful, and contrite heart, confessing what is past, and amending for the time to come, without respect to any external administration of confession to men. For it is plain that the publican, who is there made the example of a penitent sinner, upon his *smiting on his breast*, and *saying* in private to God, *O God, be merciful to me a sinner, went away justified*, (Luke xviii. 13.) that is, accepted of God, when the other was rejected. The same thing may be gathered from that other parable of the prodigal son.

It appears, from what I have said, (and much more might be said to this purpose,) what little colour there is for this doctrine, that sacramental confession was instituted by Christ, and by him made necessary to true repentance, since from the scriptures we see the quite contrary.

But the strength of the Romanists doth not lie, as to this point, in the scripture, (nor indeed in many other points,) but in the multitude of vouchers which they pretend to have for their doctrine in antiquity: they give out, that this was the doctrine of the fathers, and the practice of the ancient Christians. Well, this we shall now consider in the second place.

2. And as to this pretence of theirs, we shall say two things; the first by way of confession. In the first place, we grant that public confessions of sins in the face of the church, especially of notorious and scandalous sins, was much in use in the primitive church, and was a constant part of the ancient discipline. We grant also, that private confession of sins to a discreet minister, in order to the obtaining direction and comfort to the penitent, was both fre-

quently recommended, and frequently practised in all times ; but more especially after the public confessions grew into disuse. But then, having granted this, we say, in the second place, that this makes nothing in the world to that confession which is now required in the church of Rome ; for as to their auricular sacramental confession we dare affirm these three things :

(1.) First, that it was never enjoined or commanded by any law of the church, as a necessary duty incumbent upon all Christians, till the council of Lateran, about four hundred years ago ; which council was the same that established the doctrine of transubstantiation, and that other doctrine of deposing of princes in case they were heretical : but this is not all. Even in that council, this business of confession was only enjoined as an ecclesiastical constitution, and not bound upon us by any law of God ; and that was modest enough, in comparison of what came afterward. But afterwards came the council of Trent, almost in the memory of our fathers ; and that was the first council that ever decreed private confession to a priest to be the ordinance of Christ, and necessary to salvation. So that whatever boast the Romanists make of antiquity being on their side, as to this point, it is certain that auricular confession, as it now stands, was not a law of the church, or thought necessary, till within less than these hundred and fifty years.

(2.) But, secondly, we will go further : it is certain that it cannot be made to appear from any testimony of the ancient fathers, that confession of sins to a priest in private was ever looked upon as any more than a thing very advisable and very useful

in several cases, both for the directing a man in the conduct of his religious life, and as a means for the obtaining comfort, if he was in any affliction or perplexity.

(3.) But, thirdly, it is also certain that the ancient fathers of the Christian church were so far from thinking that private confession was an essential part of repentance; they were so far from thinking that it was instituted by Christ, and necessary to salvation, (which is that which the church of Rome now teaches,) that they taught directly the contrary; as abundance of instances might be given, if this were a proper place. “What have I to do with men,” saith St. Augustin, “that they should hear my confession, as though they could heal my disease.” St. Chrysostom also to the same purpose; “It is not necessary,” says he, “that thou shouldest confess in the presence of witnesses; let the iniquity of thy offences be made in thy thoughts; let this judgment be made without a witness; let God only see thee confessing: therefore I entreat and beseech you, that you would continually make your confessions to God, for I do not bring thee into the theatre of thy fellow-servants, neither do I constrain thee to discover thy sins unto men. Unclasp thy conscience before God, and shew thy wounds to him, and of him ask a medicine.” And very many other passages he hath to this purpose.

Doth this now favour the Romish doctrine concerning confession? doth it not directly contradict it? What shall we say? The Council of Trent decrees, that “whosoever shall affirm that confession of all our mortal sins to a priest” (that we can remember) “is not necessary to the obtaining forgive-



“ness of them, shall be accursed.” St. Augustin, St. Chrysostom, and many others, do pointblank affirm that this confession is not necessary, but that forgiveness may be had without it. Either therefore the Roman anathemas are of no force, nor to be regarded by us; or, if they be, St. Augustin and St. Chrysostom, and other such good men, are involved in them as deeply as we protestants.

3. But then, thirdly and lastly; as they have neither scripture nor ancient fathers on their side, so neither have they any colour of reason for this business of confession, as they have ordered it: for whilst they teach that every man is bound to confess all his mortal sins, even the most secret, even the sins of his thoughts and desires, that, after the most diligent examination, he finds himself guilty of; and that if he do not so confess he is not qualified for pardon; and whilst, on the other side, it is a most difficult matter for a penitent to know which of his sins are mortal, and which are not; and likewise when it is he hath made a diligent examination of his own heart concerning his sins, and when he hath not; what a world of endless scruples and perplexities is every man almost by this doctrine led into! For at this rate, what man can be assured that he hath confessed all his sins so particularly, so circumstantially as he ought to do; or that he hath used that fidelity and care in examining his own conscience that the law of Christ exacts from him? This is so true, that it was long ago observed by a famous man of their own, that, according to the cases, inquiries, and conclusions that the casuists had made in this matter of confession, it was impossible for any man to make a right confession.



But further; this is not the only evil consequence that follows upon that doctrine; for this mischief also attends it, that, according to this notion, not he that most truly repents him of his sins, and most endeavours to forsake them, is best qualified for the mercy of God; but he that most accurately repeats them to the confessor, and enumerates their several circumstances. For let a man be never so much sorry for his sins, and never so much endeavour to reform his life; yet, if he do not perform this part of the sacrament of penance, he is not in so safe a condition as that man is who is less sorry for his sins, and doth less endeavour to forsake them, supposing he do but confess well to the priest, and receive his absolution.

Lastly, to conclude; as this confession is managed by the church of Rome, it is so far from being a check or a bridle upon a man to have a care of committing the same sins again that he hath thus confessed, (which is the greatest, and indeed the only thing in reason that is pretended for the usefulness of this kind of confession,) that, on the contrary, as the thing is managed, it gives a great encouragement for sinners to continue in their sins. For this being their doctrine, that whenever a man is sorry for his sins, and confesseth them to the priest, and thereupon receiveth his absolution, upon promise to perform the penance enjoined; the man so doing doth that very moment receive remission, as to the eternal punishment of his sins, and is put into a state of God's favour: what follows from hence, but that the man may now, without scruple or trouble of conscience, go on again in the same course of life? All his old sins are now washed away, and he begins

upon a new score, and it is but repeating his confession, and getting a new absolution, and he is as safe as if he had never been a sinner. This is one of the natural consequences of this doctrine, and that a great many in the Roman communion do frequently reduce this into practice is too evident to be denied.

And now I do appeal to all men that will impartially consider these things that I have now represented, (and I am sure I have faithfully represented matters as they stand on both sides,) whether their doctrine or ours have the better foundation; whether our doctrine be not much more agreeable to the scriptures, to reason, and to the primitive practice; more tending to the ease and peace and comfort, and more to the edification of souls, than their doctrine is.

Let all of us therefore, when we find ourselves burdened with the weight of our sins, apply to God, and unburden ourselves of them by confession to him. If we need either advice, or assistance, or direction, or comfort, we may call in the assistance of pious and discreet ministers; nay, we ought in prudence to do so, and we are wanting to ourselves if we do not. But still the confession that is necessary to the obtaining our pardon must ever be understood of confession to God. Whosoever humbly and sorrowfully confesses his sins to him, and endeavours to forsake them, such a man shall find pardon, whether he confess to men or no.

This is the protestant doctrine, and let us all adhere to it, and practise it.

And God Almighty give us grace, that we may no longer *cover our sins*, but with humble and penitent hearts *confess them* and *forsake them*. So shall we *find mercy* through Jesus Christ, &c.

# A S E R M O N

ON

## PROVERBS XXVIII. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth them and forsaketh them shall find mercy.*

WHAT I undertook to shew from this text was, that the church of Rome was corrupt, and had innovated in the matter of repentance. I have already insisted on that which they call auricular sacramental confession, and which they have made necessary to true repentance. Of this having largely treated before, I shall not repeat now any thing that I said.

The second corruption with which we charge the church of Rome in the matter of repentance is, their doctrine of satisfaction. Satisfaction is, by them, made one of the three necessary and essential parts of repentance. And what they mean by *satisfaction* I shall now declare to you.

Thus far we are all agreed, that God Almighty, as the governor of the world, in his infinite wisdom, thought it fit not to pardon the sins of mankind without some satisfaction or compensation made to him for the breach of his laws.

Thus far likewise we do agree in the second place, that our Lord Jesus Christ, who was God and man, did, in his own person, by his incarnation, and especially by his cruel sufferings and ignominious death upon the cross, make such a satisfaction to

God for the sins of mankind, that in consideration thereof he was willing to pardon them.

And thus far likewise, in the third place, is agreed on both sides, that to all true penitents this satisfaction that Christ made to God is imputed, and shall be available for the everlasting salvation of their souls. Thus far both parties concur in their doctrine.

But then here we begin to differ. We say, according to the doctrine of the scriptures, that wherever the guilt of sin is remitted to any person, the punishment is remitted also. And we say likewise, that the case is the same as to sins committed before baptism and sins committed after; whosoever truly repents of his sins which he hath committed after he became Christian, those sins shall as truly be forgiven to him as those were that were committed by him before baptism.

But now they teach quite otherwise. They say there is not the same remission of sins after baptism as there was before. The sins of the heathen state were all done away entirely by the sacrament of baptism; but as for those that are committed afterwards there is a different consideration; a full satisfaction must be made for them by the person that committed them, otherwise they will not be forgiven. They grant indeed, that every true penitent shall, by virtue of Christ's satisfaction, have his portion in the life to come at the long run: but, for all that, if he do not make satisfaction for all his mortal sins in this life, he must do it severely in the next. They distinguish between the guilt of sin and the punishment of it. They say, that to every Christian that repents his sin is forgiven, as to the guilt of it, so that he shall

not die eternally ; but notwithstanding there is a temporal punishment due, which, for all the forgiveness of the guilt, the sinner must undergo either here or hereafter ; either here, by performing such severe penances as the faults require ; or hereafter, by enduring a severe punishment in the flames of purgatory. And lest we should think this temporal punishment of purgatory but a jesting matter, they assure us that it is not so ; but both as to the duration of it and the severity of it, it is very dreadful. For the duration of it, it may last (for ought we know) from the time of our death till the day of judgment. As for the sharpness of it, they say, it is in all respects as tormenting as the pains of hell itself ; and there is no difference but only this, that this punishment of purgatory shall at last have an end, but the pains of hell never shall.

Well ; but what way is there for making these satisfactions ? what remedy is there against these dreadful torments in the other life ? Why, to this the council of Trent answers gravely, that satisfactions for our sins are made partly by patiently suffering the afflictions that are sent us by God, and partly by performing those penances that are enjoined us by our priest upon confession.

But the comfort is, there is a better way, and a much casier than this ; and that I shall now give you an account of. There is a stock of merits left to the disposal of the church ; that is, both the merits of Jesus Christ, as many of them as were more than enough for the satisfying for the eternal punishment of the sins of mankind ; and likewise the merits of all the saints, that were more than enough for the satisfying for their own sins ; I say, all these are the stock



or treasure of the church, and may be dispensed out to particular persons, as the governor of the church, the vicar of Christ upon earth, shall think fit.

And two ways there are by which the benefit of these merits may be made over to us ; that is to say, by indulgence, and by procuring masses to be celebrated and alms to be given for us after we are dead. By either of these ways our personal satisfaction for our sins is excused. And according to the proportion of these indulgences or masses that we have purchased, our punishment in the next world will either be lessened or wholly taken away. In proportion to the share of the church's treasure that we have provided to ourselves, either we shall never come into purgatory at all, or, if we do, we shall stay there the less time, or our pains will be proportionably abated.

This is a plain representation of their doctrine as to this matter. And I think no man among them, that understands their religion, but will own all that I have now delivered to be the sense of their church. But how false and unreasonable this doctrine is, and of what mischievous consequences to the souls of men, will appear by representing these two following things :

1. First of all, there is no ground either in reason or scripture, that when God hath once forgiven a man's sins, as to the guilt of them, he should afterwards inflict the punishments of those sins upon the offender : which is the main principle upon which their doctrine proceeds.

2. Secondly, their doctrine of purgatory, that is to say, that there is a temporal punishment after this life to be inflicted upon all those who have not made full satisfaction for their sins, either by themselves



or others ; though in the mean time the sins have been repented of, and are forgiven by God ; I say, this doctrine is altogether groundless, and not only so, but is against the tenor of the scriptures.

I. To these two things I shall speak : and first of all, we say they do ill in this matter to distinguish between the guilt of sin and the punishment of it ; and to affirm, that God doth forgive the sins of Christians upon their repentance, but doth not excuse them from that temporal punishment that doth necessarily and inseparably adhere to them : this, we say, is against both reason and scripture.

1. First of all, it is in the reason of the thing absurd : for forgiveness of the guilt of a crime doth, in the very nature of it, imply an exemption from the punishment that was due to that crime ; otherwise it is not properly forgiveness : we do not here deny that good men, after they have heartily repented of their sins, and God hath forgiven them, may notwithstanding afterwards be severely visited by God in this life ; may fall into many afflictions and calamities, and sometimes very sad ones ; this is granted on all hands. And whosoever denies it, as he contradicts scripture, so he contradicts the experience of all ages. But this we say, these visitations, these sufferings, these afflictions which God sends upon those persons, are not properly punishments for those sins of theirs which God hath already forgiven, but are sent to them upon another account. They are the natural result of the constitution of things here below, and God makes use of them as chastisements, or as trials to pious persons. They are inflicted not as punishments, but as mercies ; not as the effects of God's justice, but of his kindness ; it is intended thereby

that either something that was amiss in them may be reformed, or that their faith and patience and other virtues should be exercised, both to their own final comfort, and the benefit of others that are about them. These are that discipline that God useth with his children, but not punishments properly so called.

But are not the temporal judgments of God punishments upon bad men and impenitent sinners? and do not good men suffer the very same judgments? Both these things are true; but yet we say, the same thing inflicted upon one sort of men is properly a punishment, but with respect to the other sort it is not. For instance, here is one man, by the sentence of the judge, ordered to be branded with a hot iron for a crime that he is convicted of: here is another man, by the order of his physician, seared in one of his limbs for the cure of some ulcer or gangrene he hath contracted. Both these persons now suffer the same thing, and endure the same sort of pain and smart; but yet I hope nobody will deny that this sufferance is upon a quite different account, and hath a quite different notion. In the former case, what is inflicted is truly and properly a punishment, for the man suffers as a malefactor; in the latter, it is not a punishment, but a medicine, and the man suffers only in order to a cure. And the very same thing may be said as to the afflictions of good and bad men in this life; which distinction, if it be applied, will perfectly solve all those texts of scripture that are brought by the Romanists in favour of this their doctrine.

2. But, secondly, we say further, this doctrine of theirs is not only unreasonable in itself, but it is without any ground in scripture; nay, it is expressly

against what the scripture declares. Our Saviour hath taught us in our daily petitions thus to pray ; *Forgive us our debts*, (meaning our sins,) *as we forgive our debtors*, Matt. vi. 12. But can any man be said to forgive a debt to another, and yet at the same time require the payment of it either in whole or in part ? Either therefore there is no punishment exacted after forgiveness of our sins, or our Saviour commands us to pray daily for that which God will never grant us.

Furthermore, the forgiveness of our sins is always represented in scripture as a thing perfectly free and gratuitous ; as a pure effect of God's undeserved favour and goodness. But how can that consist with the popish notion of forgiveness, which supposeth that we cannot be absolved from the punishment of our sins, till we have either here or hereafter paid the uttermost farthing that we were accountable for ?

Lastly, so far is God from exacting the punishment of any man's sins after he hath repented of them, that he expressly declares that he never will do it. Among other texts, that in Ezekiel is very remarkable ; *If the wicked*, says he, *will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right*, (which is the just description of a true repentance,) *he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions which he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him* ; or, as other translations have it, *shall not be remembered to him*, Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. And sure, if God do not remember them, if God do not mention them, there is no fear that he will punish them afterwards ; and that for the preventing that punish-

ment the sinner must make a complete satisfaction to the divine justice, either by himself or others, as the Romanists teach.

II. And thus much of the first proposition. The second is this: the popish doctrine of a dreadful temporal punishment after this life, to be inflicted on all those who have not made complete satisfaction for all their sins in this life, is altogether groundless, having no foundation in scripture or antiquity, but directly repugnant thereto.

Their doctrine is, that all souls that have not made satisfaction for their sins while they lived, though all those sins were remitted, so that they shall never go to hell, but at last shall go to heaven; yet they shall in the other state undergo a grievous punishment in a certain kind of prison, which they call purgatory, for so long time till they be perfectly purged of their sins.

But is there one word of this doctrine in the scriptures or the ancient fathers? Not a tittle. Two places they do indeed produce, which they say doth much countenance it; the one is that passage of our Saviour, where, speaking of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, he says, that *that sin shall neither be forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come*, Matt. xii. 32. From whence they take the liberty to conclude, that some sins, though they are not forgiven in this world, may be forgiven in the world to come; and consequently there is a purgatory, a place for the purifying souls from their sins in the other state.

But in answer to this, let us ask them seriously this question: Did our Saviour in this place speak of the forgiveness of sins in the other world with

respect to the temporal punishment that was due to them or the eternal? If he spoke of the forgiveness of the eternal punishment, then his words make nothing for purgatory, but much against it. For their doctrine is, that sins, as to the eternal punishment of them, are upon repentance forgiven in this world and not in the next; and that the state of purgatory is only ordained as a temporal punishment of those sins for which satisfaction was not made in this life. But, on the other side, if they say that our Saviour, when he said that the sin against the Holy Ghost *should neither be forgiven in this world nor the world to come*, meant this forgiveness of the temporal punishment that is due to crimes in the other world, which is their notion of purgatory, then they make our Saviour to speak a flat contradiction; for they make him to say that this temporal punishment shall never be forgiven; which is, in other words, just thus: that this temporal punishment which shall have an end, shall be an eternal punishment which shall never have an end: which as it overthrows their doctrine of purgatory, so it is as great a contradiction as can be.

If any one then should ask what is the meaning of our Saviour's expression, that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost *shall neither be forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come*; I answer, the plain account of the phrase is this: Our Saviour, as far as can be conjectured from his words, did not in the least think of the popish purgatory, nor any thing like it, when he uttered this speech. All that he designed to express was this; that the contempt and blasphemy of the Pharisees against the Holy Ghost (which they were guilty of, in saying that



our Saviour did his miracles by the help of the Devil, and not by the Spirit of God) was so grievous a sin, that it should be punished severely both in this world and in the other. And the phrase by which he expresseth this was very well known to the Jews to whom he spake; for he used it by way of allusion to a tenet of theirs. It was a common, received doctrine among the Jews, and is to this day, that for some sins a man was pardoned presently upon his repentance; that other sins were not pardoned till the solemn day of expiation; and others not to be expiated but by some grievous temporal affliction; but that all would be expiated at the death of the offender, provided he were an Israelite, who, as such, must have his portion in the happiness of another world. To this doctrine of theirs our Saviour seems to have respect when he tells them, that this was a crime which should not be expiated at their death, according to their conceit; but whosoever should be guilty of it would have a miserable portion in the world to come. This seems to be the full sense of the expression.

As for the other text of scripture, which several of the Roman doctors urge for purgatory, it is that passage of St. Paul, where he says, that if any man, *upon the foundations of Christianity, which were laid by the apostles, do build hay and stubble, and such kind of rubbish, his works should perish, and he should suffer loss: but he himself should be saved; yet so as by fire*, 1 Cor. iii. 15. This several of the Romanists do thus interpret; That the man that was thus guilty should indeed, upon his repentance, be eternally saved at last; but yet he



must be purged from his sins after he died, by undergoing the fire of purgatory. An admirable proof of purgatory : as if every body did not understand the particle of similitude here used, *so as by fire*, was enough to shew that St. Paul did not here intend an escape out of the fire literally ; but such an escape as men make out of an house that is on fire. The words ought to be rendered, *he himself shall be saved, yet so as out of the fire*. Now it is well known, that by this phrase can be meant no more than this ; that it would be a hard thing for the man to escape ; he run a great risk, his safety was very hazardous, and if he was preserved, it would be with a great deal of difficulty. This expression of escaping *as out of the fire*, was a common proverbial way of speaking both among the Jews and among the heathens in the apostles' time ; and it is always used in this sense both in the scripture and other authors. What else is the meaning of that passage in Amos, ch. iv. 11. *Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning* : and of that other passage of Jude ; *Others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire*, ver 23 ; which expressions only signify the greatness of the danger, and the difficulty of escaping it : so that certainly we may conclude, that from this text no purgatory flames can be kindled. All that St. Paul says is, that the teachers of false doctrines, those that misrepresented Christianity, their works should be consumed ; for time would discover truth, and truth should prevail at last ; but the persons that thus taught falsely, that thus *built hay and stubble upon the foundation of Christ*, they should, for this their prevaricating, be in great danger of being severely punished : but yet, upon their repentance, they might

escape; but it would be with a great deal of difficulty; their condition was very hazardous and dangerous.

Thus I have given an account of these two texts which the champions of the Romish faith lay the greatest stress upon; and I hope we may be all convinced, that they do not do the work they are brought for: and several of the Romanists themselves are indeed on our side in this matter, acknowledging freely, that neither of them are to be interpreted of purgatory. But this we are certain of, that if these two texts do not speak of purgatory, there are no other texts do; nay, not only so, but there are many texts speak against it.

The scripture doctrine concerning the condition of men, after they depart out of this body, is only this; that there are two estates belonging to dying men, a good one and a bad one. As to all persons that die true believers and true penitents, they immediately upon their death are put into a happy condition, and shall continue in that condition till the day of judgment; at which time their happiness shall be completed and consummated by the resurrection of their bodies. As for unbelievers, and wicked livers, and impenitents, they are immediately upon their death put into a miserable condition, and so shall continue for ever; though perhaps their misery will not have its consummation and extremity till the day of judgment and the general conflagration of the world, as neither the other had their happiness completed till that time. This is plainly the scripture account of the state of souls departed; and there is no mention there in the least of souls that are in purgatory torments, but rather much against it.

Our Saviour, in that famous parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. doth seem thus to represent the state of the other world; viz. that the souls of good men immediately upon their death are in a happy condition, and the souls of bad men in a state of torments. For no sooner did Lazarus die, but he was carried by angels into the bosom of Abraham, (which bosom of Abraham was a common phrase among the Israelites, as appears yet by their writings by which they used to express the happiness and blessedness of pious souls departed,) and, on the other side, the covetous, voluptuous rich man was put immediately into a state of torment. Now though we grant that this discourse of our Saviour is no more than a parable, yet we can never imagine that he would contrive a parable in such a manner, that the very ground and foundation upon which it proceeded should be false: but this is not all. It is evidently plain, from the whole current of the New Testament, that all persons that die true penitents, and in the state of salvation, are immediately put into a happy condition; and therefore consequently there is no such purging, tormenting fire to be undergone by them as the papists dream of. St. Paul more than once mentions two houses or tabernacles; the one, the tabernacle of the body that we are now clothed with; the other, that house from heaven with which good men be clothed upon in the other life: but his discourse always implies, that as soon as ever good men die, they go straight to Christ, and shall put on that heavenly tabernacle, and pass immediately into that everlasting city above, whose maker and builder is God.

Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ promised the

penitent thief upon the cross, that that *very day he should be with him in paradise*. Now paradise certainly is the state or place of happiness that God hath prepared for all holy souls after their departure hence. There is no term more usual among the Jews, both the ancient and the modern, for the expressing this, than the term of *paradise*. But however, if it was not so usual, yet our Saviour's words fix it to that sense: the thief was *that day to be with him in paradise*. Now sure nobody will say that our Saviour went to purgatory, but to heaven; and therefore the thief went thither also. And what can more destroy the doctrine of purgatory and satisfactions than this? for if satisfaction be necessary, as they teach it is, and if purgatory be the place where satisfactions are to be made after this life, then certainly the penitent thief, according to their doctrine, must have continued a long time in purgatory; for no satisfaction had he made for his sins, as to their temporal punishment, since he died after a vicious life, upon a very short and sudden repentance: but yet we see the quite contrary; for he did not go to purgatory, but to that place where our Saviour was to be, that is, the place of the blessed.

But if any objection be made against this instance; as that this thief had not received baptism when he repented, but that his shameful death was in the place of baptism to him, and consequently he had all his sins remitted to him without satisfaction, as all persons upon their baptism have; but as for sins committed after baptism the case is otherwise: as to this, we say, that this pretence will be quite taken away by another text that I am going to mention. St. John, in the Revelations, tells us, that he *heard this*

*voice from heaven, and was commanded to write it, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours; and their works follow them*, ch. xiv. 13. Here it is said indefinitely of all the disciples of Christ; all that die in his religion and in his fear, that *blessed are they when they die, for they rest from their labours*. But now how can this proposition consist with the doctrine of purgatory? If all that die in Christ do rest from their labours, then it is very certain that none of them are punished and tormented after they are dead. For how can rest from labours stand with dreadful miseries and cruel sufferings, as souls in purgatory are said to undergo? If this doctrine was true, they would not have a rest from their labours, but only a change of them; they would go from one labour to another; from a light labour in this life to a most heavy and insupportable one in the other state. No, certainly, to suppose that all that die in Christ, that is, all true penitents, do *rest from their labours, and their works follow them*, (as St. John here, from the authority of the Holy Spirit, affirmeth,) is to suppose that they are all in a happy, blissful condition, and that they receive the rewards of their virtue and piety: and consequently the whole doctrine of purgatory is but a romance; a thing invented, not only without the warrant, but against the warrant of the holy scriptures.

And as we do affirm that this doctrine of purgatory is without scripture, so we do affirm that it is without and against the sense and the doctrine of the ancient church of Christ for many centuries. This, I think, we may confidently say, and make it good, that there is no one father, nor any one council



of the primitive church (that is owned by the church of Rome themselves) for five hundred years after Christ, that ever taught the doctrine of purgatory as they now teach and believe it; and, on the other side, we can produce several passages of several of the primitive fathers that do wholly make against it.

Two persons are indeed quoted by them, that were of great name and reputation in the church, who seem to talk on their side; and these are Origen and Tertullian: but neither of these men's testimonies will do any credit to their cause.

For as for Origen, (so far as we can gather from his writings now extant, if indeed they be his,) his opinion was, that all the punishments that God inflicted after this life were purgatory punishments; that is, would have an end: and that after such a determinate time both devils and wicked men, having undergone their purgations, should be released from their torments, and enter upon a new scene of things. But this makes nothing in the world to the doctrine of purgatory as it is established in the church of Rome; for they make purgatory distinct from hell, holding the former to be temporal, but the other eternal.

As for the other father, Tertullian, it is very certain that all the time he continued a catholic Christian he spoke not one word of purgatory; (as far as appears by his writings;) but after he forsook the catholic communion, and turned to the side of Montanus, whom he held to be the Holy Ghost, then indeed he talked of a relief that departed souls, which died in an imperfect state, were to expect from their sufferings, by the Paraclete, that is, by the Holy Ghost; which Paraclete he affirmed to be Montanus.



This is all the evidence and all the authority that the papists have for their purgatory from primitive antiquity; and let them make the best they can of it, and much good may it do them. On the other side, it is very certain that the current of the ancients runs perfectly against them; as might be made good, if this was a fit place for it.

But I will proceed no further in this argument. I hope I have given you so plain an account of the popish doctrine in this matter, and have so plainly confuted it from the scripture, that I hope the most ordinary capacity may understand it, and be satisfied of the erroneousness of it.

# A S E R M O N

ON

## PROVERBS XXVIII. 13.

*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper : but whoso confesseth them and forsaketh them shall find mercy.*

**Y**OU may please to remember, that my design was to take occasion from these words to consider the popish doctrines of repentance, and to endeavour to shew both the novelty and the erroneousness and the danger of them.

And two doctrines of this kind I have already insisted upon.

First, that of auricular sacramental confession. In treating of which I both shewed how far our church, and all other protestants, do own and approve of confession to men, and what the doctrine of the church of Rome was in this matter ; and also that this imposition of theirs was a new thing without warrant from scripture, without warrant from antiquity, and that which was both unreasonable in itself, and, in many cases, of ill consequence.

The second general error I insisted upon was, the doctrine of satisfactions, to be made in person by every sinner, even after his sin is forgiven him, either in this life, or in the purgatory flames of the other world, unless he prevent it by procuring indulgences, or getting masses to be said for him. Now, in opposition to this doctrine, I shewed, that there is no ground, either in reason or scripture,

that when God hath once forgiven a man's sins, as to the guilt of them, he should afterwards inflict the punishment of these sins upon the offender; (which is the main principle upon which their doctrine proceeds;) and that their doctrine of purgatory hath no foundation in scripture, or in early antiquity, but, on the contrary, is against the tenor of both.

I now proceed to a third doctrine of the church of Rome concerning this matter of repentance, which doth flatly contradict the notion of repentance here delivered in the text, and is likewise of mischievous consequence to the souls of men; and that is, that they make contrition, with the priest's absolution, at any time sufficient to wash away all our sins, and to procure the pardon of God for them.

This is the avowed doctrine of the whole church of Rome, and confirmed by the authority of the council of Trent. Now, that we may not be at a loss what they mean by *contrition*, the said council hath given us a definition of it; "that it is grief of mind  
" for sin committed, and a detestation of it, together  
" with a purpose to sin no more." So that whosoever is thus contrite, and confesseth his sins to the priest, and receives his absolution, promising to perform the penance enjoined, is actually put into a state of salvation from that moment.

This doctrine now, we say, is both against the scripture notion of repentance declared in the text, and in other places, and it is of ill consequence as to the lives of men.

1. First, it contradicts the scripture notion of repentance; for that, as appears both from our text, and abundance of other places, includes in it, not only a sorrow for sin, and resolution against it, but a for-

saking of it also: only *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy*. Let a man be never so sorry for his sins, and purpose never so heartily to sin no more, yet if, notwithstanding, he still continues to pursue the same vicious courses, he is not a true penitent. The word by which the true evangelical saving repentance is expressed is *μετάνοια*, which signifies not a transient passion for having offended God, or only a sudden purpose to change our lives, but it signifies an actual change of the mind and will, a transformation of the whole soul from bad principles to good. And where once this change, this transformation is made, there must of necessity follow a new life, a conversation quite different from that which was led before; a habit of such actions as are agreeable to the laws of God. Godly sorrow for sin, which is that which the papists mean by contrition, is not repentance, and cannot procure pardon; but it is only a good disposition, a right preparation to repentance. This the apostle hath most expressly told us, when he saith, that *godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. If then it be the thing that works repentance, it is not repentance itself.

2. But, secondly, this doctrine, that contrition, with confession and absolution, doth put a man into a state of salvation, is not only against the scriptures, but against good life; for it gives any man that believes it great encouragement to continue in his sins all his life long, and that upon this account, that it quite puts him off from thinking that there is ever any necessity that he should reform his life. According to this doctrine, it is but being sorry for my sins at some solemn times, when I come to confes-

sion, and resolving to do so no more ; and presently, upon the priest's pronouncing a few words to me, I am absolved of the guilt of them ; I am put into the favour of God, and, if I die that moment, I shall be finally saved. Well ; but what if I do not perform my resolutions that I then made, but return to my sins again ? Why, it is but my repeating the same medicine, being sorry again, and resolving again, and taking absolution again, and then I am as right again as ever I was : and thus, *toties quoties*, as often as I thus repent, so often are my sins forgiven me. And at my last hour, though I have all my life continued in my sins, yet this repentance and this absolution will as certainly pass me into a right of the favour of God, as if I had never so much reformed my life, and lived never so innocently and virtuously ; always excepting the purgatory punishments that I may, without satisfactions and indulgences, endure in another life.

But now, upon these principles, how can any sinner that is in love with his sins, and deeply engaged in a wicked course, how can he ever think himself obliged to reformation ? how shall he ever be drawn to enter upon, much less to go through, that tedious fatigue of mortification, that intolerable, burdensome business of forsaking his sins, since the being sorry for them will do as well ? What man would be at that pains, when he can obtain pardon and salvation upon so much easier terms ?

But I have hitherto given you the fairest representation of the Romish doctrine of repentance, as to this matter ; that that the strictest casuists among them will be concluded by. But, in truth, it is generally thought too strict and severe for the

sinners that they have to deal with ; and therefore they have yet easier conditions for penitents to obtain pardon, than those I have now mentioned. Contrition is too heavy a burden to impose upon sinners ; and therefore they have found out a way in which a sinner shall be reconciled to God upon easier terms, (still supposing that he confess and receive absolution,) and that is by the means of attrition, or imperfect contrition, as the council of Trent calls it ; even this, with the sacrament of penance, will do the business. Now what they mean by attrition we may gather from what we said of contrition ; for if contrition be a hatred of sin, with a resolution against it, then attrition, or imperfect contrition, must be an imperfect hatred of sin, with an imperfect resolution against it. So that whosoever affirms that attrition, with the priest's absolution, shall be available for the procuring justification before God, doth affirm, that though a man be not so sorry for his sins as he should, nor doth perfectly resolve against them, but only hath some imperfect purposes to forsake them ; yet such a man shall, upon this slight repentance, have his sins forgiven him by God.

This now one of us would think was dangerous doctrine ; yet really it is no other than what is professedly taught by as great doctors as any they have ; and those not one or two, but abundance ; and those not only Jesuitical casuists, but of all other sorts ; nay, books have been published among them, to shew that this is the prevailing authorized doctrine of their divines. It would be endless to quote authorities in a matter so acknowledged as this is : I will, among an heap that is by sundry authors col-



lected to our hands, give you the words of one of their divines, and he as eminent and learned as any they have. He there shews, “ that grave men, and “ famous in their church, do assert, that a penitent “ having received the sacrament of penance, that is, “ having confessed, and been absolved, is not bound “ to so much as one act of contrition, or the love of “ God, in order to his reconciliation with God: nay, “ allow a man hath hated God to the last act of his “ life, if he receives the sacrament of penance, they “ deny that it is necessary for him to be contrite for “ his sins, or to love God.” This is wild enough, but what follows is more extravagant, and that is this; “ that the excellency of the evangelical sacraments “ above the legal consists in this, that the gospel “ sacraments have freed us *à gravissimo contritionis “ et dilectionis Dei iugo* ;” that is, “ they have freed “ us from the most heavy yoke of contrition, and of “ the love of God.”

Is not this wonderfully pious and Christian? are not these men excellent guides of souls? and is not a sinner admirably provided for, that puts himself under their conduct? And yet this is the doctrine that is frequently taught by the wisest and gravest of their divines. But when they are urged with this, it is usually replied, that this is only the judgment of particular men, and that the whole church ought not to be charged with it, since it was never established nor decreed by any general council. But how frivolous is this pretence; as if men of their communion, in the business of their repentance, did always strictly examine the decrees of councils, and did not rather wholly give up themselves to the government of their spiritual guides. We know that all

their penitents are managed by their confessors ; and we can prove, that their confessors do instil such notions as these into their penitents ; nay, and do avow to all the world in their printed books that they are true. It concerns them therefore to shew, that these notions and doctrines are disallowed and discountenanced by the pope, or by some council. If they can do this, we will no longer lay the fault of their private doctors on their church in general ; but this they cannot do. For though some of the Jansenists have appeared vigorously against this doctrine we are now talking of, still the pope could never yet be induced to condemn it, or to put a mark of infamy upon it.

But this is not all : whatever some of them say, that this is not the doctrine of the church, but rather the doctrine of private men ; to any one that understands a consequence, it will appear to be a professed, established doctrine of the church, and that by the holy council of Trent itself.

For the proof of this, I desire only that these two passages may be compared together : in one place, the council determines this ; “ That attrition, or imperfect contrition, though it cannot bring a man to justification without the sacrament of penance, yet it doth dispose men for the obtaining the grace of God by the sacrament of penance.” But now in another place it is decreed, “ that all the sacraments do confer grace on all those who are disposed to receive it.”

Let any one now judge, upon comparing these two determinations, whether it doth not necessarily follow from hence, that all those that have but imperfect contrition, or bare attrition for their sins, are by the

sacrament of penance put into a state of salvation, according to the doctrine of the council of Trent. All sacraments do confer the grace they are ordained for to all that are rightly disposed. Bare attrition, or imperfect sorrow for sin, and imperfect purposes against it, doth dispose a man to obtain grace by the sacrament of penance: both these propositions are laid down by the council of Trent. What in the world then can follow more necessarily than this, that, according to that council, “attrition, with the “sacrament of penance, doth put a man into a state “of grace?”

But is not this a most mischievous doctrine, that a little grief of mind, though it do not proceed from the love of God, but merely from the fear of punishment; and though it be not accompanied with firm and steadfast resolutions to forsake our sins, but only hath in it some slight purposes to live better; (nay, it is enough, as the council of Trent seems to intimate, that the sinner, at that time when he repents, hath not an actual purpose to sin again;) that this, after a vicious life, after repeated acts of sin, after many habits of it inveterately continued in, should, by the priest's pronouncing three or four words, cancel all a man's sins past, and so reconcile him to God, that if he die that moment he is sure at last of everlasting happiness? What a comfortable doctrine is this to sinners! how admirably doth it reconcile those two things which in all other religions have been thought inconsistent the love of sin, and the love of God! an habit of vice and a title to eternal happiness! What wonder is it, that so many dissolute persons go over to the communion of that church, where pardon and reconciliation with God are to be had upon such

easy conditions? If sinners give up themselves into the bosom of that holy church to be made better, it would be commendable; but the principles taught by them do not seem to tend that way; and it is much to be presumed, that it is not a reformation of life that their proselytes design when they leave us, but a continuance in their sins with greater security and greater comfort than we could promise to them in our way. What Zosimus the pagan historian maliciously says of Constantine, viz, “that he was so great a criminal that no other religion could give him any hopes of pardon, and therefore he turned to Christianity, the baptismal waters of which would with one dash wash away all his sins;” may be truly said, it is to be feared, of many of our converts to the Roman church. The lives that they lead are so bad, that, so long as they continue in that state, no other religion but that of the church of Rome can give them encouragement to hope for salvation. But that religion can and doth, by the excellent expedients they have invented for the restoring wicked persons, so continuing, to the grace and mercy of God.

Thus have I gone through those three principal errors in the doctrine of repentance which the church of Rome hath introduced; namely, their asserting the necessity of auricular confession; their asserting the necessity of satisfactions after God hath forgiven sin, upon which is founded their doctrine of purgatory and indulgences; and, lastly, their holding that contrition, or even attrition, by the virtue of the sacrament of penance, is sufficient to put any man into a state of salvation.

But, besides these, there are several other doctrines

relating to this business of repentance frequently taught in that church, and that without any check or reproof, which it is fit all serious persons, that have a care of their souls, should be informed of, and cautioned against.

I shall briefly name two of them. First of all, one position generally maintained by the popish casuists and confessors is, that a man is not bound presently to repent of a sin that he is guilty of; no, not though it be a mortal sin. Some time or other they acknowledge that he is bound to repent of his sin; but to do it presently upon the commission of the sin there is no obligation upon him by the divine law. If he so manage his affairs, that his repentance be performed at all, it is enough; and there is no more required of him. It is indeed very true, that the council of Lateran, that council that first established auricular confession, doth oblige all Christians to repent once a year at least, and to go to confession, and that is at the solemn time of Easter. But this, the casuists say, is only a law and rule of the church; but we are not tied to it by the law of God. All that we are obliged to by God's law is, to repent *in articulo mortis*, the time when we come to die: and as for the injunction of the church, we satisfy that by performing the outward solemnity of repentance, the ritual part of it, which consists in confession and coming to the sacrament. One of their famous doctors voucheth this to be the doctrine both of pope Adrian and cardinal Cajetan; and, indeed, to be the sense of all men. But now is not this a most godly doctrine? doth it not tend mightily to the reformation of all wicked livers? On the contrary, I would know what can give greater encouragement to any



man to continue in his evil courses than this doctrine doth? You have now committed some grievous crime, and it lies heavy upon your conscience: why, be not afraid for that; if you will now presently go and unburden yourself by confession, and take up new resolutions, you may do well, and take a good course to secure your salvation; but yet this you are not bound to. Though you are at present in a state of enmity to God, yet there is no law ties you to be immediately reconciled; if it be but done at any time before you die, it is enough. Is not this kind of reasoning extremely tending to licentiousness, and giving encouragement to all sorts of riots and debaucheries? What can put a more effectual bar to a man's reformation of his manners than this doctrine does, if it be once believed?

Secondly, what they teach as to the time of a man's repenting is not more pernicious to souls, than what they teach as to the kind of sins to be repented of. Their distinction of sins into two sorts, mortal and venial, is sufficiently known. Which distinction, as they order it, is really an hinderance of repentance; or breeds in every man, that embraceth that distinction, such a false notion of repentance, that he cannot in reason think himself obliged to set himself upon the mortifying and the forsaking several habits of sin which he may find himself guilty of.

It is true, we do admit of the distinction of mortal sins, and venial in some sense. We do, with the ancient fathers, allow, that some sins are of such malignity, or may be committed with such aggravating circumstances, that one act of them shall put a man out of a state of grace; they shall be mortal



to any man that is guilty of them, unless he perform a particular repentance for them. On the other side, we say, that there are some sins that are consistent with a state of grace, and which the best of God's children are subject to, and may now and then fall into; yet, if they strive against them, if they daily beg pardon for them, these sins shall not be imputed to them at the day of judgment; nay, if they die in them without a particular repentance, yet, if they be good in the main, if they have repented of all their sins in general, both known and unknown, these sins shall do them no mischief. For still, notwithstanding these ignorances and infirmities, they are within the covenant of grace; and God, for the merits of Jesus Christ, will pass by and forgive these sins in all those who have, for the main of their lives, lived up to the terms of the gospel. But yet at the same time that we say this, we hold likewise that all sins in their own nature, and in the rigour of the divine justice, are damnable, and deserve God's wrath and indignation; and that in all unregenerate men they are so accounted; and that in hell the damned suffer the punishments as well of their small sins as of their great ones. So that no sin in itself is venial; but through the merits of Christ, some sins will, even without a particular repentance, find pardon. But yet even the most venial sins, the most light and inconsiderable offences, if they be indulged, if they be encouraged, if care be not taken of them, but they increase and grow strong upon us, and at last become habits; in this case, we say, they are no longer sins of infirmity, but God will account with us for them, as wilful, deliberate sins. This is the protestant doctrine concerning venial and mortal sins.

But that which the papists teach in this matter is quite another thing. If by their venial sins they meant no more than those daily frailties and infirmities that good and virtuous persons are subject to, and which they continually strive against, and do their utmost endeavour to overcome; if this was their notion, we should not find fault with it: but that which they mean by venial sins is quite another thing. They teach, that there is a whole kind of sins which may claim pardon from God as of right, such as, if all of them in the world were put together, could not equal one mortal sin. They hold them to be such, that if we be never so much guilty of them, they cannot put us out of the favour of God; and it is impossible that any man, upon account of them, should perish eternally.

Now, I say, what is the natural consequence of this doctrine, but to make men perfectly careless of repenting, as to one whole kind of sins; and such sins too, as they are most apt and inclinable to fall into every day, and consequently ought to watch and fortify their minds more particularly against them than any others? But by this doctrine men's consciences are bid to be at perfect ease, and they are not to disquiet themselves as to these small matters; though in a little time these venial sins (no care being taken of them) do grow to a vast number, and become a course of habitual sin: and that, that was a sin of infirmity at the first, for want of repentance and striving against it, is grown as wilful and as customary a sin as any the man is guilty of.

The application of all this, and the use I desire it may be put to, is this; that we would none of us

take our measures of repentance from men, what infallibility soever they pretend to, but frame it according to those models that God, by his prophets and apostles, and especially by his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, hath given us in the scriptures, which are the standing rule by which all mankind are to be guided: that we would not be fond of new inventions, that are contrived for the making the way of salvation easier than Christ hath made it in his holy gospel; that we would stand to those rules and directions that God hath given us concerning repentance, viz. a hearty sorrow for all our sins, and an humble confession of them to our heavenly Father, and forsaking them henceforward, in the course of our lives; upon which terms only we shall find mercy. And consequently, in pursuance of this, that we would not think that we repent truly, when we make a full enumeration of our sins to our confessor, or when we are in a pang of sorrow for our vileness and many miscarriages, or even when we make the most solemn and severe resolutions to live better, unless, by the fruits of our lives, we shew that those resolutions were effectual. Much less should we put off our repentance to futurity, and think it sufficient that in our last hour we do our endeavour to reconcile ourselves to God; but presently, as soon as ever we find ourselves guilty of any offence, should humbly and sorrowfully beg pardon, and use all those means that God hath appointed for reconciliation.

And far be it from us, in this business of repentance, to make such a difference of sins that we are guilty of, as to think that some may be safely admitted by us, without fear of the divine vengeance,

though others will prove damnable. For we are to strive against all, remembering that every sin, indulged and continued in, may prove fatal and damnable to us.

Lastly, let us, in this affair of repentance, stick to Solomon's precept; which, as it sufficiently directs us to the truth, so it sufficiently gives us a caveat against all those errors by which we may be imposed upon in this affair, viz. *that he only who confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy.*

# A S E R M O N

ON

1 CORINTH. XI. 23-25.

*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

**M**ANY abuses, at the time of writing this Epistle, were crept into the church of Corinth, in the matter of the holy communion ; many disorders they were guilty of, when they met together, in the receiving of it. These abuses and disorders the apostle here complains of, and endeavours to reform. The method he takes for that purpose is, to set before their eyes the primitive institution of that sacrament ; the ends for which our Lord appointed that mystery ; and the manner in which his disciples were partakers of it. This he proposes to them as a pattern for them to follow, or a test whereby they might try their own practices in this matter, whether they were allowable or not.

This is the full scope and design of these words I have read unto you ; *I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night that he was betrayed, took bread, &c.* As if he had said, Consider well, whether these tumults and disorders, which I hear are committed among you when ye come to receive the

Lord's supper, do suit with that account I formerly gave you of the ends and institution of it? Do your practices correspond with the doctrine I delivered to you concerning it? and yet I delivered nothing but what I had received before of the Lord himself. My doctrines about the sacrament were no fancies or inventions of my own, but what our Saviour taught and practised. Hither therefore you are to look back; by this rule you are to be tried, whether your present practices be good or bad, be to be approved or condemned; and if you be found guilty, according to this rule, you are to reform them.

After this manner doth the apostle's reasoning proceed; and the great point that I gather from it is this; that in all the ordinances and appointments of Christianity, (such as the sacraments are,) the rule and measure by which all succeeding churches are to square their doctrine and practice, is the original institution of our Lord, and the usage of the apostles: and when any abuses or corruptions happen in a church, as to these matters, they are to be reformed by that primitive pattern.

It is true, every thing that we find in scripture practised by our Saviour or his apostles, in those parts of Christian worship we are speaking of, doth not precisely oblige all churches. There are many circumstances in the receiving the sacrament, for instance, (as indeed in every action,) which do not enter the nature of the action, but are indifferent to it; and so may be thus, or may be otherwise, without transgressing the original precept or institution; for instance, the time, the place, the posture, the number of the persons joining in the action, and the like. In these things, our Saviour's or the apostles'



practice is no obliging precedent to us; but we are to be determined by the laws of the church or the customs of our country. Our Saviour gave the sacrament in the evening, and after a meal; but this doth not make our receiving it fasting, and in the morning, to be unlawful. He gave it in an upper room; but we may, for all that, safely receive it in churches. His giving it to his disciples sitting or leaning, will be no bar to our taking it kneeling; no more than his administering it only to twelve persons will make it an abuse in us to dispense it to a full congregation.

We must therefore distinguish between the essentials in religious worship and the external accidents that clothe it; between what enters the nature of the action, and what is merely circumstantial. It is with respect to the former of these we lay down our proposition, and of which we understand it; and being so understood, it will be always true in all ages of the church, that the rule and compass by which every church is to steer herself, as to her doctrine and practice about the sacrament, is, the original institution of our Lord, and the doctrine and practices of the apostles, pursuant thereupon, as they are delivered to us in the scriptures: and when any particular church swerves from this, and teaches or practises things inconsistent with it, it is so far guilty of abuses, and stands in need of reformation.

And indeed this rule holds not only in matters of worship, but in matters of faith also. Whatever is delivered in scripture by our Saviour and his apostles as an article of faith, that is firmly to be believed as such by all Christians; but whatever is not there delivered, how true soever it may be in itself, yet no church in the world can make it an article of

faith, or oblige her subjects to believe it as such : and, on the other side, whatever article of religion any church proposeth to us, if upon examination we find it to clash with, or be repugnant to the doctrine of the scripture delivered by our Saviour and his apostles, it is so far from being a Christian doctrine, how infallible soever the church that proposeth it pretends to be, that it is a corruption of Christianity, and ought to be rejected by all good Christians. In a word, both in matters of faith and in matters of Christian worship, the scripture is our rule. What the apostles have received of our Saviour, and there delivered to us, that is the standard both of our belief and our practice : what they taught, we must embrace : what they ordered in the worship of God, we must follow : whatever is taught or ordered, either in matter of faith or sacrament, inconsistent herewith, we must reject as an innovation, as an abuse, as a corruption of the catholic religion.

Thus far I have been led to discourse by the general reason of the apostle's argument here used ; but you see the use for which it is brought in the text is, the redressing some particular abuses that the Corinthians were guilty of in this matter of the Lord's supper. To the same use I shall henceforward, in this Discourse, apply it.

And in truth, never were there greater abuses of this sacrament than there are at this day ; nay, never was any precept or institution of Christianity more perverted to ends contrary to those that were first intended in it, than this ordinance of our Lord's. Of this we have notorious instances in the present avowed doctrine and practices of that church ; which would be thought the only catholic and apostolical

church, and condemns all the other churches in the world as heretical and schismatical.

It is my design here faithfully to represent to you what that church teacheth and practiseth concerning this sacrament, and to examine those doctrines and practices by that rule and standard the apostle here gives us, viz. the primitive institution and practice of our Lord and his apostles; and then I will leave it to you to judge, whether they have not horribly spoiled and depraved this so sacred and essential an ordinance of Christianity; whether they have not made it quite another thing than it was at the first; nay, whether they have not so far disguised and transformed it, that if a primitive Christian of the apostles' days was to live again, and be present at their mass-service, he would not be so far from knowing it to be the sacred supper that our Lord instituted, that he would rather take it for some paganish and idolatrous worship.

I now choose this argument, because I believe if you were duly informed of the practices of the church of Rome in this matter, and how widely she hath swerved from the scripture rule, and from the primitive practice of the Christian church; and that not only in a circumstance or two, but in things that touch the very essence and nature of the sacrament; you will be much confirmed in the protestant religion you do profess, and be convinced what great and demonstrative reasons we have, why we ought not to join in communion with that church of Rome upon those terms she offereth it.

The sacrament is not a matter of notion or speculation; we cannot say of it as we are apt to do of other things controverted between us, It is a school-

point, about which our doctors are not agreed; and till they be agreed, both sides may safely, without danger of salvation, hold their opinions. No, it is a matter of practice; it is the most solemn part of the Christian worship; and we are all infinitely concerned that we be right both in our notions and practices about it; even just as much concerned as we are that we worship God in a right way. And therefore, if upon trial it be found that the church of Rome is corrupt as to this thing, that they perform not this worship in the way that Christ instituted it and his apostles practised it, but in a way quite different, nay, perhaps, contrary; I hope we shall none of us be very forward to leave our own church, and go over to theirs, whatever other plausible arguments they offer for the persuading us.

It is the policy of the Romish factors, when they deal with protestants in order to the perverting them, to keep themselves within general terms and commendations of the catholic church. Many and long harangues they will make of the infallibility of St. Peter, and of the pope's being his successor; that there is but one church in which salvation is to be had, and that their particular Roman church is that church; and they can prove it by twenty marks of the true church, antiquity, succession, perpetual visibility, and all the rest: whereas our church is but of yesterday's standing, and was never heard of before Luther. While they amuse their hearers with these general encomiums of their church, and invectives against ours, all which indeed look very plausible; (though yet in truth there is nothing in the whole argument but craft and sophistry;) it is no wonder if they now and then entangle unwary

persons in their net ; for not one of a thousand is a competent judge of these kind of arguments ; and they know those that they deal with are not so well studied in history and antiquity as to be able to confute them. And therefore be their arguments true or false, it is but affirming strongly, when they meet with a good-natured, credulous man, and their work is done ; but let us but get them out of these generalities, and bring them to particulars, and the case will be otherwise. Here even an ordinary understanding, that is but well acquainted with the scripture, will be able to find some footing, and will not be so easily imposed upon. Nay, as to several particulars that are controverted between us and the Romanists, a protestant, that tolerably well understands his religion, will not only be able to keep his own ground as to these particulars, but from hence will be able to draw arguments that will overthrow those general doctrines I before mentioned, upon which the adversary lays his greatest stress ; and which if he can once bring us to, he is sure he hath us. For instance, let the particular we pitch upon be the daily service of the Roman church, prescribed by their mass-book, and resorted to every day by all those that have opportunity, and any sense of devotion. The chief part of this daily service is the communion, or the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. If now it be plainly and demonstratively proved, that in this their service, as they practise it, there are many great errors ; many things believed and practised which are utterly inconsistent with the doctrine and practice of Christ and his apostles in this matter ; of the guilt of all which every one that joins in the service is a



partaker ; I say, if a protestant be but able to prove this one particular, (as certainly every one that competently understands their religion, and understands ours, may be easily able to do,) as he will not be easily beat off from his hold, as to this particular, by their general arguments ; as he will be afraid to communicate in such a worship as he believes to be unchristian, and will draw so great a guilt upon him ; so he will be able to draw an argument from thence that will effectually confute all their pretences to antiquity, apostolicalness, and the rest of the specious characters that they would stamp upon themselves. For how can that church be an infallible church which teacheth so many errors in the chiefest part of the Christian worship, the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper ? or how can that be an apostolical church that practiseth so differently, so contrarily to the apostles of our Lord in this particular ? Nay, how can this church be any sound member of the catholic, universal church of Christ, that hath so far departed from the institution of our Saviour, and the usage of the primitive church in the highest mystery of the Christian religion, that scarce any one, that knows how things were then taught and ordered in this matter, and how they are taught and ordered now, would believe it to be the same mystery ?

I have said enough of the usefulness of this argument ; I come now to the argument itself ; that is, to examine the Romish doctrine and practices about the sacrament of the Lord's supper by the rule the apostle here lays down ; that is, the institution of Christ, and the practice and tradition of the apostles ; and I am confident, upon the whole evidence, it will



easily appear to every unprejudiced person, that we have not charged that church with any thing in this matter but what is too plain and evident to be denied. I shall not insist here on their making seven sacraments, all of equal authority, all equally necessary to salvation, (though not to every particular person,) all equally conferring grace ; whereas, by all we can gather from scripture, Christ never instituted more than two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I shall not here insist on their having the whole service or office of the Sacrament in the Latin tongue, a language which none but the learned do understand, and which, consequently, the people are not edified by ; which practice, for that reason, the apostle St. Paul doth severely reprove in the Corinthians. Neither shall I insist on the priest's muttering the words of consecration to himself, so as that none of the congregation shall hear what he says, though it be without any precedent in the ancient times. Neither shall I insist on the multitude of masses or sacraments that they allow to be celebrated in the same church on the same day, and even at the same time, at the instance of any one that will be at the charge of purchasing them : the price indeed is not great, no more than twelpence a mass ; but what a vile prostitution of the blessed sacrament this is, every body may judge.

These corruptions and abuses of the sacrament in the church of Rome, though they be very great, yet I pass them over, because they will appear small and inconsiderable in comparison of those I come now to mention to you.

Five grievous errors and abuses we charge the church of Rome with in the matter of the sacra-

ment; so grievous that, if they be found guilty of any one of them, no man that reads the scripture can believe that the sacrament, as they hold it, can be the same with that which our Saviour instituted.

1. The first is, that whereas in every mass that is said in that church (and there are every day said many thousands) they have a communion; yet there is none communicates but the priest: so that here there is every day, in the church of Rome, a communion without a communion.

2. Secondly, that at those solemn times when they will allow the people to communicate with the priest in the holy sacrament, yet they rob them of half of it; for they will not allow any but the priest who then administers to receive the cup: so that here, though there be a communion, yet it is but half of the communion that our Saviour appointed.

3. Thirdly, they have transformed the sacrament into a sacrifice: whereas the only mystery of it consists in this, that thereby Christ gives his body and blood, in a spiritual manner, to be fed upon by us, they have made a new business of it; for in every sacrament they pretend to offer up our Saviour's very body and blood as a sacrifice to God.

4. Fourthly, whereas in this sacrament, according to our Saviour's institution, there is a material part, and a spiritual; the sign, and the thing signified; the bread and wine to be received for our bodily sustenance, and the body and blood of Christ for the food of our souls; they have quite taken away the former from us: for they will not allow us to believe that the sign, the symbol, the bread and wine which we think we receive, and eat and drink, is

either sign or symbol, or bread and wine, but the very natural body and blood of Christ.

5. Fifthly and lastly, this very bread (as we are apt to call it) which we receive and eat, and the wine that the priest drinks, they require us to worship and adore as very God Almighty, and that under pain of damnation.

These are the points and articles in which we accuse the church of Rome to have grievously corrupted and depraved the Christian doctrine and practice in this matter of the sacrament. And I shall now endeavour to make this charge good, by a particular consideration of each of them.

The first abuse we charge them with is, their private masses. In every mass that is said in the Roman church, there is a communion; for that, as I said, is the principal part of the mass service. But now, as that service is daily performed among them, the custom is, for none but the priest to communicate; he consecrates the sacrament, and then offers it up to God, and then receives it in both kinds himself. But though there be a thousand people present at the service, nay, perhaps several priests among them, yet none are partakers with him; none but he tastes either the bread or wine: all that they have to do is, only to behold and worship. This is the course of their daily service, and this every one that hath ever been at mass may know to be true: and the council of Trent, which hath the same authority among them that the scriptures have among us, is so far from disowning this practice, that she commends it. I will give it you in the very words of the council: "The holy synod doth  
" not condemn those masses in which the priest only

“ communicates, as if they were private and unlawful, but doth approve of them, and also commend them.” And one of the canons of that council is expressed in these words: “ Whosoever affirms, that the masses in which the priest only doth sacramentally communicate, are unlawful, and therefore to be abolished, let him be accursed.”

I now appeal to any one who hath read what the Gospels and what St. Paul speaks of the sacrament, whether this be not a great abuse, and whether this practice of theirs be not directly contradictory to the ends and design of the sacrament, as our Saviour instituted it. The sacrament was intended for a communion, as the scripture teacheth, and as all Christian writers have taught; and the very council of Trent, by the terms which she useth of the priest's communicating, seems to acknowledge: and yet, you see, here is a sacrament administered, and yet no communion. The priest is indeed said to communicate, but with whom? Why, none but himself. It is just as good sense as if you should say, a man communicates a secret, or a mystery, to himself.

Our Saviour *blessed the bread, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples. He took the cup, and bid them all drink of it.* And this the apostles practised after him. St. Paul, discoursing of this sacrament, makes it to be the sign or symbol of our union one with another. One of the ends of its institution, according to him, was the joining all Christians together in one common body, society, or fraternity. This he expressly tells us, 1 Cor. x. 17. *We being many are one bread, and one body: because we are all partakers of that one bread,* viz. the sacramental bread.

If now his doctrine be true, it is impossible that any sacrament that is solemnized in the way we have been speaking of, can be a true sacrament. If one great business of the sacrament be the signifying the union of all Christians in one body, which signification is made by their all partaking of the same sacramental bread, then surely that service, in which none partakes of that bread but the priest, cannot be thought a true or a just sacrament; because the union and society of Christians one with another is not there signified or represented.

But let us leave the scriptures, for it is certain they are so far from favouring the popish practice in this matter, that they quite contradict it. Is there any countenance for such kind of private masses we are speaking of, where the priest communicates alone, from any doctrine of the fathers? from any order of councils? from any practice or usage of any one Christian church for many ages after Christ? Baiting what Christ and his apostles have delivered in this matter, if they can give us one instance from antiquity, that any such private masses were ever approved of, or practised, or so much as thought of, it will gain some credit to their cause; but this they cannot give us. The fathers never speak of the sacrament but as of a communion; and they severely reprove (as we ought to do now) all those who, when they have opportunity of receiving the sacrament, do not receive it. The old canons are so severe against those persons that come to church, and join in the prayers and sermons, and yet refuse to partake in the sacraments, that they declare them excommunicate for their neglect in that point. And there cannot, for the term of six



hundred years, (I believe I might almost double the term,) any instance be given, that any mass was performed in any church, wherein the priest only received the sacrament, and none of the congregation with him. This I affirm so confidently, because our protestants have constantly challenged the papists in all these points, and were never yet tolerably answered.

But we need no further argument against this present practice of the church of Rome, than the very name by which they call their office of the sacrament, that is, *the mass*. If any one will look into their own authors, concerning the notion and signification of this term *mass*, he will, even in them, find this account given of it: that that which we call *mass*, or *missa* in Latin, is the communion-office; and it was therefore called *missa* or *mass* by the ancients, because, when that came to be said, all those who did not intend to partake of the sacrament were dismissed the congregation: the deacon told them they were to be gone. And in the old rituals of the church of Rome, we find there were peculiar officers appointed, whose employment it was to turn out of the church all those who did not join in the communion. This, it is certain, is the notion of the old mass; and from hence it is as certain, that the old Roman church never dreamed of private masses, wherein the priest alone should communicate, but that some devout persons always communicated with him; otherwise, according to this rule, the priest must have been left all alone by himself.

The second great point wherein we accuse the church of Rome to have departed from Christ's institution, and the apostolical practice in this business



of the sacrament, is their denying the cup to the people.

In their daily and ordinary sacraments we have seen the people do not communicate at all, which is a great abuse. But this is not all: even at those solemn times, when it is the custom for the people to receive the sacrament, (as every one, by their canons, is obliged at least to receive once a year,) yet they are not allowed to receive it in both kinds, as our Saviour ordained it; but they only receive the bread. None but the priest who consecrates hath the benefit of the cup; and this they hold a point so necessary, and so indispensable, that the council of Constance excommunicates all those ministers that shall dare to give the cup of the sacrament to any layman; and, in pursuance of what was then ordained, the council of Trent hath made these two canons: “ If any one  
“ shall say, that all the faithful people of Christ are  
“ bound, by virtue of any commandment of God, or  
“ as of necessity to salvation, to receive the sacra-  
“ ment of the eucharist in both kinds, let him be ac-  
“ cursed”—And, “ If any one shall say that there  
“ were not just causes and reason, moving the church  
“ to administer the sacrament to the laity only under  
“ one kind, that of bread, or shall say that the  
“ church hath herein erred, let him be accursed.”

This is the law of the church, and their practice is conformable thereto; as every person that hath received the sacrament among them very well knows.

But now let any one that hath ever read the New Testament be judge between us and them in this matter. *Our Saviour, (as appears by the Gospel,) the same night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it*

*to his disciples, saying, Take, eat ; this is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me. Likewise he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins,* Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. These are the words of the institution : and I appeal to any man living, whether, according to these words of institution, our Lord did not make the cup every whit as necessary, as essential to his sacrament of the supper, as he made the bread ? I am confident none will or can deny it. If there be any difference, he hath laid more stress upon drinking the cup, than upon eating the bread ; for as to the bread, he only said, *Take, eat ;* which is an indefinite command, and doth not necessarily imply that all there present were concerned in it ; it might be spoken only to one or more of them. But when he comes to speak of the cup, he saith, *Drink ye all of it.* By which he gives express command, that all there present should be partakers. So that from this difference in the expression, one would be apt to think that he meant to caution his disciples, the succeeding Christians, against that corruption which he foresaw would be introduced into his church, of receiving the sacrament of the bread without the cup.

It is true, when we urge this institution of our Saviour to the Romanists, they have this to say for themselves ; “ It is no wonder that our Saviour administered the sacrament in both kinds to his disciples at the institution, for they were all priests that were partakers of it. The apostles who then communicated were clergymen ; and it cannot from

“ hence be concluded that the laity have any right to “ the same privilege.” They grant indeed, that the apostles were laymen, and represented the whole body of Christians when they received the bread; but when our Saviour said these words, *Hoc facite, Do this in remembrance of me*, by those very words he ordained them priests; and these words were spoken before he gave them the cup: so that when he came to dispense the other part of the sacrament, that is, the wine, to them, they then did not receive as laymen, as the representatives of the people, but as clergymen.

This, though it be wonderfully subtle, yet it is so far taken notice of by the council of Trent, that they have made this canon, “ that whoever should say, “ that Christ, when he spoke those words, *Hoc facite, Do this in remembrance of me*, did not by “ those words ordain his apostles to be priests, let him “ be accursed.” But this curse notwithstanding, how dreadful soever it be, they will never be able to prove that the apostles were more priests, more in holy orders, when they drank the wine, than when they eat the bread. If we will consult the scripture and antiquity, we shall be convinced that they were perfect laymen in both the actions, and they received no orders or consecration to the priesthood till after our Saviour rose from the dead; for then, when he *breathed upon them*, (immediately before his ascension into heaven,) and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained*, John xx. 22, 23. then they were entered into holy orders, and not before. And thus much of the words of the institution of our Lord.

As for the practice of the apostles, nothing in the world is clearer, than that in their days all faithful people received it in both kinds; and it was then thought necessary they should do so. This is sufficiently plain from what St. Paul discourseth to the Corinthians in the words after my text: *As oft, says he, as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* The same St. Paul likewise, in the tenth chapter of this Epistle, ver. 16. gives us this account of the sacrament: *The cup of blessing, says he, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* If now this be the use and the end of those elements of bread and wine in the sacrament, why then we may safely conclude that the one of them is as essential to the sacrament as the other; and that both are indeed necessary. For I would ask, is not the communion of Christ's blood as necessary to our salvation as the communion of his body? and the communion of the body as that of the blood? Certainly none will deny it. We are both to eat the flesh of Christ and to drink his blood, if we mean to have eternal life. If so, then it plainly follows, that that which represents his blood in the sacrament is as necessary to be taken as that which represents his body; and so *vice versa*.

But the papists make a very good shift to bring themselves off from this difficulty, by saying, that the whole perfect Christ, as he lived in the flesh, is contained in the bread alone: so that by receiving the bread, you do virtually receive the cup also; for you receive both the body and blood of Christ: and whosoever denies this, is, by the council of Trent,

pronounced accursed. This is that with which they stop the mouths of all those disciples of theirs that desire satisfaction in this business. But if this be so, I would fain know for what purpose Christ instituted the cup? If his disciples in receiving the bread had received both his body and blood, what need was there afterward that he should give them the cup, and call it *the new testament in his blood*? Though God be never wanting in necessities, yet he never exceeds in superfluities.

Again: if partaking of the bread be the communion both of the body and blood of Christ, why should St. Paul, as we have seen, make such a distinction between the bread and the cup, calling one, *the communion of the body of Christ*, and the other, *the communion of his blood*? Lastly, we would ask of them, since, according to their doctrine, both the body and the blood are received in the bread, what is it which the priest, who administers, receives when he takes the cup? (for he always receives in both kinds.) Is it to him *a communion of the blood of Christ*, or is it not? if it be not, for what end doth he receive it? if it be, why then are the people denied it? certainly they have as much right to have *communion in Christ's blood* as the priests have. If the cup be of no necessity, or no advantage to him, he had better let it alone. If it be, then there is all the reason in the world that the people should be sharers of it as well as he.

The truth is, this practice of theirs of denying the cup to the laity is every way so unchristian, so unreasonable, that one would wonder how ever it should obtain among those that call themselves a Christian church. It is, as we have seen, directly contrary to



the institution of our Saviour, and the doctrine and practice of his apostles. And they cannot say of this, as they say of some others of their doctrines, that they have it from the tradition of the church; for they cannot produce one testimony out of any one author, that for a thousand years after Christ it was ever known that any church in the world, no, not the Roman church herself, ever administered the sacrament to the people in one kind. And this their own authors do confess. One instance indeed I ought to except, and that is the practice of the Manichees, which St. Augustin makes mention of. They indeed held that the cup of the sacrament was an abominable thing; and for this reason, because they taught wine was not of God's creation, but of the Devil's. But these kind of people (as all the world knows) were justly detested as most lewd heretics. If the church of Rome will plead this practice of theirs for their precedent, in the matter we charge them with, much good do them with it. But as for others, we are sure they have none.

The first establishment of this way in the Roman church, and that is the only church in the world wherein it doth yet obtain, was by the council of Constance, which I mentioned before; which council was held about two hundred and sixty years ago. And, by a good token, it is the same council by whose order the famous John Hus, the forerunner of Luther, was burnt for a heretic, although they had before given him safe conduct. About one hundred and thirty years after, that is, about an hundred and thirty years ago, came the famous council of Trent, wherein popery was formed into that shape it now hath, and established by a law, which it never



was before. In this council many tough debates there were about the business we are speaking of, whether the people should have the cup restored to them or no. The ambassadors both of the emperor and the king of France, and of most of the princes of Germany, did very earnestly, in the name of their several masters, petition the council for it, and represented to them the dangerous consequences that would follow, if the laity were not allowed the sacrament in both kinds. But with all their arguments they prevailed nothing. So powerful was the pope's faction at that holy synod, that against the strongest reasons in the world, they carried it for the continuing that sacrilegious denial of the cup, that the former council had brought in. Nay, so zealous was one of the cardinals for this innovation, that he protested, that he would never give his consent that the people should have a cup of such deadly poison administered to them, as that cup was that they desired; and it was better they should die than be cured by such a remedy. And what was the reason, think you, for all this heat and zeal against so plain an institution of Christ? Why, truly, the greatest that I could ever find, in all their disputes, are these three:

First, they said those that desired the cup were disaffected persons, and not true catholics; and if they should condescend to them in that particular, they would be so far from being satisfied, that they would take occasion, from that easiness of theirs, to make further encroachments upon them, and would be for having their prayers in a known language, and such other things as the Roman church could not allow.

Secondly, they said the clergy were already in sufficient contempt, and if they should let the people enjoy the same privileges in the sacraments with them, it would make way for a further contempt of them; for it would, in a manner, render the priest and the people equal.

Thirdly, they said the church of Rome cannot err. But that church, in the aforementioned council of Constance, had taken the cup of the sacrament away from the people, and given good reason for it. If therefore they should now grant it to them again, it would be a shrewd argument to the heretics, that the church had been before in a mistake; which to suppose was intolerable.

These are really the chiefest reasons that they bring for the continuing this practice of half communion against the earnest desires and endeavours of most of the princes of Christendom; and are they not, think you, very formidable ones? Do they not strongly and convincingly prove the thing they are brought for? Christ and his apostles gave the sacrament in both kinds, and ordered it should be so done for ever; and all the churches in the world have always practised accordingly, except the church of Rome, for some three hundred years last past. But now, for fear the laity should be thought of equal dignity with the clergy, and for fear, if what the church of Rome had done once amiss, and against Christ's institution, should be amended, that church should suffer, as to her credit, and the reputation of her infallibility; for these considerations, that holy and universal synod, notwithstanding Christ's institution, notwithstanding the apostles' practice, notwithstanding the usage of the catholic church for so

many ages, have ordered, “ that none, in the public  
“ sacrament, shall communicate in both the elements  
“ of the bread and wine, but only the priest that  
“ consecrates.”

This is the plain state of the matter : I have not injured them, nor have I abused you in representing it. I am sure I have dealt faithfully, and have said nothing concerning matter of fact, but what I have from their own books. As for my reasonings, and the consequences drawn from them, I leave to you, and all considering men, to judge of.

And thus much is sufficient to have spoken of these two first abuses of the sacrament in the church of Rome : the rest I shall take another opportunity to speak to.

# A S E R M O N

ON

1 CORINTH. XI. 23-25.

*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

**I** HAVE made one Discourse upon this text already. The design of these words, or the end for which they come in here, is the redressing some abuses that were in the Corinthian church in the matter of the blessed sacrament of the supper.

The general doctrine which we are to observe from them is this; that in all the ordinances and appointments of Christianity, particularly that of the sacrament, the rule and measure by which all succeeding churches are to square their doctrines and practices is, the original institution of our Lord, and the usage of the apostles; and when any abuses or corruptions happen in a church, as to these matters, by that primitive pattern they are to be reformed.

The use I meant to put this doctrine to was, to inquire and examine by this rule, whether there were not grievous abuses and corruptions in the church of Rome, not only tolerated, but openly

avowed and maintained at this day in the service of the holy communion.

And here I undertook faithfully to represent their doctrines and practices in this matter ; and, on the other side, to represent the doctrine and practice of Christ and his apostles, and to leave you and all unprejudiced people to judge, whether that church hath not departed from the primitive rule, the institution of Christ, and the doctrine and practice of the first Christians ; and, consequently, whether she be not guilty of great abuses and corruptions.

Five grievous errors and abuses we charged the church of Rome with, in the matter of the sacrament. The two first of them have been considered, and largely spoken to. I come therefore now to the third general point wherein we accuse her ; and that is, that of a sacrament they have made it a sacrifice. Whereas the design of Christ, in the institution of it, was to feast us at his table, by making us partakers of his body and blood in a spiritual manner ; they have made the great design of it to be the priest's feasting God Almighty with the body and blood of his Son, by offering it up to him in sacrifice.

In speaking to which point, I shall do these three things :

1. First, Give you an account how far we own the service of the sacrament to be a sacrifice.

2. Secondly, Give you a particular account of the doctrine of the church of Rome in this matter, in what sense she holds the sacrament to be a sacrifice.

3. Thirdly, Shew you, by several arguments, the disagreeableness of this doctrine of theirs with the institution of Christ, the tenor of the holy scriptures, and the reason of the thing.



I. First of all, I shall acquaint you with the protestant doctrine in this matter of the sacrament.

We do not deny, that the whole office of the communion, as it is ordered in our Liturgy, and as it is performed by us, may be called *a sacrifice*; nor do we scruple to call this service *the Christian sacrifice*, by way of eminency, because we find the ancient fathers frequently so styling it: but then, it is only upon these three accounts we give it that name; and, upon examination, it will be found that it was for the same reason, and in the same notions, that it was so called by antiquity.

1. First of all, in this service we bring our offerings to God for the use of the poor. We do not appear before him empty, but make a present to him of our substance, every one according to his ability; whereby we both acknowledge him for the Lord of the world, and the giver of all the good things we enjoy, and also shew our charity to our indigent brethren, with which kind of sacrifice St. Paul tells us *God is well pleased*. These gifts of ours, our church calleth by the name of *offerings* and *oblations*; and in the first solemn prayer in this office, we beg of God to accept those our alms and oblations: and this is the name that both scripture and antiquity give to these gifts; and these oblations make up one great part of that unbloody sacrifice of Christians that the fathers so often speak of. It is true, in this we differ from the primitive church, that we now offer to God only in money; but they always, besides other things, brought bread and wine in kind; which after it had been solemnly presented to God, the priest took a part of it, and, by consecration, made of it the body and blood of Christ, as the lan-



guage of those times was; which being done, he distributed to the people: so that the people, having offered to God, were by him feasted at his table with part of their own offerings, as the manner was in the Jewish peace-offerings, with which this Christian service hath a great affinity. This was the ancient custom, and in this we at this day differ from them; but the thing wherein we differ is so very inconsiderable, and so no way relating to the essence of the sacrament; and, withal, the reason for altering the custom, and bringing in oblations of money, instead of bread and wine, in those times, so good, that we ought not to be concerned at the difference, or to wish the revival of the old custom: for we offer to God as well as they, and for the same purpose that they did, and our offerings are as properly a sacrifice as theirs was.

That which I desire to infer from hence is this, that very probably from this account I have given of the ancient oblations of the Christians, we may be able to discover whence it was, and upon what grounds the popish sacrifice of the mass, wherein they pretend to offer the body and blood of Christ, came into the church. It plainly came from a mistake of that ancient sacrifice, or from not distinguishing that sacrifice from that other office of consecration of the elements, which followed, in order to be performed by the priest.

They who introduced the popish sacrifice knew very well from history that the communicants brought bread and wine as an offering to God when they approached the Lord's table; and that the priest did solemnly present these offerings of the people to God upon his altar as their sacrifice, and

implored his acceptance of them as such. And this sacrifice they might perhaps, in some authors, find to be called the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ ; because, that of those offerings, as I said, it was the custom to take some part, and to consecrate them for the elements, to be received by all faithful Christians as the body and blood of Christ. But, not attending to the order of these two services, nor minding how they were quite distinct the one from the other, they have jumbled them into one and the same thing. And whereas before, the people, or the priest in their name, only offered to God their alms and oblations, now they make the priest to offer the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is true, the priest always offered the people's present unto God, but not under the notion of Christ's body and blood, but under the notion of their oblations of the fruits of the earth. It can never be shewed, that after he had once consecrated them for the body and blood of Christ, he offered them in the name of the people, but only distributed to them to eat and drink. In the first of these services, we all grant the people offered a sacrifice, or the priest in their name ; but when that sacrifice was offered and set upon God's table, then it was no longer considered as a sacrifice to God, but as a feast with which God entertained his guests.

2. But secondly, that which our church calls the offertory, that is, the oblation of our alms, is not the only sense wherein we acknowledge the service of the holy communion to be a sacrifice ; for, besides those oblations of our substance, we do also in that service offer up, in the most solemn manner, our prayers for ourselves, and our intercessions for the

whole church ; our praises likewise and our thanksgivings ; and, lastly, ourselves, our souls and bodies ; all these we offer up as a sacrifice to God, and, in the sense of antiquity, they are a main part of the Christian sacrifice.

3. But then, thirdly, to complete the Christian sacrifice, we offer up both the aforesaid oblations or sacrifices with a particular regard to that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered upon the cross, and which is now livelily represented before our eyes in the symbols of bread and wine. That sacrifice of his we now commemorate before God ; we plead the merits and the virtue of it before him, and for the merits, and by the virtue whereof, we have the confidence to offer up unto God the two forenamed sacrifices, and the confidence to hope they shall be accepted. And in this sense we will not deny that we offer up even Christ to his Father ; that is, we commemorate to God what his Son hath suffered ; we represent to him the inestimable merits of his passion ; and we desire God, for the sake of that, to be at peace with us ; to hear our prayers and accept our oblations. In this sense, I say, every protestant offers Christ to his Father ; and it is in this sense that St. Chrysostom speaks, when he says, “ What then, do we not offer every day ? Yes, we “ offer by making a commemoration of his death : “ and we do not make another sacrifice every day, “ but always the same, or rather a remembrance of “ that sacrifice.” And in the same sense says Eusebius, “ We sacrifice a remembrance of the great “ sacrifice.”

In these three things consisted the whole of the Christian sacrifice, as it was held by the primitive

fathers : they first offered to God of their substance, then they offered their prayers and their praises, and at the same time they commemorated to God the death and sacrifice of Christ, by the merits of which they hoped and they prayed, that both their oblations and themselves might be accepted.

And these three things our church observes at this day ; for, after we have made our offerings, and begged God's acceptance of them, as I said before, we come to beg of God that he would " mercifully " accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving ; " and we humbly beseech him to grant that, by the " merits and death of his Son Jesus Christ," (which we have now commemorated,) " and through faith in " his blood, we and all his whole church may obtain " remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his " passion. And we here present unto him ourselves, " our souls and bodies, as a lively sacrifice to him ; " yet being unworthy, through our manifold sins, " to offer unto him any sacrifice, we beseech him to " accept this our bounden duty and service ; not " weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, " through Jesus Christ our Lord." So that having offered up our sacrifice of alms, and our sacrifice of devotions, for the rendering these two acceptable, we plead, we commemorate, before God, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the whole of the Christian sacrifice, as the ancients understood it ; and, if the church of Rome would be content with such a sacrifice as this, I know none that would oppose them. And I am sure, if they go further, and pretend to any other sacrifice than this, they go without precedent in antiquity. We offer up our alms, we offer up our

prayers, our praises, and ourselves : and all these we offer up in the virtue and consideration of Christ's sacrifice, represented before us by way of remembrance or commemoration ; nor can it be proved that the ancients did more than this : this whole service was their Christian sacrifice, and this is ours. But the Romanists have invented a new sacrifice, which Christ never instituted, which the apostles never dreamt of, which the primitive Christians would have abhorred, and which we, if we will be followers of them, ought never to join in.

II. And this I now come, in the second place, to declare to you.

For the understanding this new mystery of the sacrifice of the mass, you are to know, in the first place, that it is the established doctrine of the church of Rome, that in the sacrament of the holy communion are contained truly, really, and substantially, not only the true body and blood, but the soul and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ ; that is to say, the whole Christ ; and whoever denies this, or affirms that Christ is only in the sacrament, as in a sign or a figure ; that he is there present only by his virtue and efficacy, he is, by the council of Trent, pronounced accursed. In what manner they thus get Christ into their hands, we know not ; but it is certain that the priest, by saying five words, always doth it ; that is, of the bread and wine makes the very true Christ ; who being thus made by the words of consecration, he is by the priest offered up in sacrifice to God ; and that in as true and proper a sense as he was offered up upon the cross at Jerusalem : and this sacrifice, thus offered by the priest, hath the same virtue in it that Christ's first sacrifice had ; that



is, it is a propitiation for the sins of the world ; it is an expiatory sacrifice both for the dead and for the living. One would scarce believe that the church of Rome should teach such doctrines as these, much less teach them for articles of faith, and require the belief of them by all her subjects under pain of damnation : but yet this really they do, as appears by these two canons which the council of Trent hath made about the mass : “ Whoever shall say, that in “ the mass there is not offered up unto God a true “ and proper sacrifice, let him be accursed.” And again : “ If any shall say, that the sacrifice of the “ mass is only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, “ or only a commemoration of the sacrifice performed “ on the cross, and that it is not propitiatory, or that “ it is only profitable to him that takes it, and ought “ not to be offered for the living and the dead, for “ all manner of sins, punishments, satisfactions, and “ other necessities, whoever affirms any of these “ things, let him be accursed.” This is the Romish doctrine concerning the sacrifice of the mass. But how groundless, how false, how absurd, nay how impious it is, I now come, in the third place, to shew.

III. 1. And first of all let it be considered, there is no foundation for any such sacrifice as this of the papists either in the institution of the supper by our Lord, or by any other example or doctrine recorded in scripture. It is certain, that all that our Saviour was pleased to order in this matter, as far as the four Evangelists can express it, doth relate to quite another purpose, and concludes, that what he himself did, and what he ordered us to do, was meant a sacrament, and not a sacrifice : *He took bread and blessed it. He gave it to his disciples, saying, Do*

*this in remembrance of me. Take, eat: this is my body, &c.* That it should be a sacrifice wherein either he should offer up himself, or command his church to offer him up to God his Father, it appears neither by any word or any act of his. For in the institution, both his words and actions are directed immediately to his disciples. And such special addresses to men are no likely proof of a sacrifice to God.

But further; did our Saviour at his first sacrament really offer up himself, body and blood and life, a true, proper sacrifice to God, or did he not? If he did not, how shall we dare to pretend to offer him up in our sacraments? If he did as the papists say he did, to what purpose did he afterwards offer himself up upon the cross? As for the other writers of the New Testament, though they have sometimes occasion to mention the sacrament of our Lord, yet not a syllable is to be found in them from whence any one can conclude that ever they dreamed it was a sacrifice. They run in the same strain that our Lord doth, of *taking, eating, and communicating in Christ's body and blood, and shewing forth his death*; but not the least intimation of our sacrificing Christ to God. Nay, St. Paul's whole discourse to the Corinthians about eating of things offered in sacrifice to idols, which he declares to be unlawful for any Christian to do, telling the Corinthians, *that they cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils*; I say, all that discourse is an effectual confutation of the Romish sacrifice. For it plainly shews that, in St. Paul's notion, the Christian communion was not a sacrifice, but a feast upon a sacrifice, as the idolatrous feasts were.

One thing there is indeed in the scripture which

the papists make a great noise with, for the proof of their mass oblation. It is Melchisedec's bringing forth bread and wine when he met Abraham, after his expedition against the five kings. Melchisedec, say they, was the priest of the most high God, and all Christian priests are after his order. Now his priesthood consisted in offering up bread and wine, and therefore theirs must do so too : this is the sum of the argument. But how little to the purpose it is, any one will easily see who considers these three things :

(1) First, they can never prove that *Melchisedec's bringing forth bread and wine*, or, as the Latin translation renders it, *offering bread and wine*, was any act of his priestly function. He brought out bread and wine, not to offer it up in sacrifice to God, but to treat and entertain Abraham and his followers, who were wearied with their journey. It was an act of humanity and hospitality to those persons, but not an act of devotion to God.

(2) But, secondly, supposing that Melchisedec did, as a priest, bring forth this bread and wine, and offered it up in sacrifice to God, yet what is this to the Christian ministers, unless it can be proved that they succeed him in his priesthood, which can never be done? We read indeed that Christ *was a priest after the order of Melchisedec*, but not a word that his ministers to the end of the world are so. Nay, the very supposition that Melchisedec was a type of Christ, and of his priesthood, will effectually destroy all pretences to that priesthood in the Gospel ministers.

(3) But, thirdly, supposing all the Christian clergy are the successors of Melchisedec, (which it is certain none of them are,) yet how doth this empower them

to offer up Christ to his Father in the communion? Melchisedec only offered bread and wine; and if the Romish priests would do no more, we should not have so much to say against them. But they pretend to offer up the very body and blood of Christ, which was certainly none of Melchisedec's offering: and therefore it is as certain that his action gave no countenance to their present practices.

2. But, secondly, let it be considered that the popish sacrifice of Christ in the mass hath not only no ground or foundation in scripture, but is as directly contrary to it as any thing in the world can be: they pretend every day to offer up Christ. The scripture flatly saith, that Christ was never to be offered up but once; and the apostle, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, mainly insists upon this. And herein he placeth the difference between the Law and the Gospel, that the sacrifices of the *law being imperfect, and not able to put away sin, were every year to be repeated*, Heb. x. 1, 2. But Christ, *by once offering up himself, hath for ever perfected all those that are sanctified*, ver. 14. And therefore, he saith, *there is no need that he should offer himself often, as the High Priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of the sacrifice; for then, says he, Christ must have often suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to take away sins by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation*, Heb. ix. 25—28.

Nothing in the world can be plainer, than that, according to St. Paul's sense, Christ was never to be offered but once ; and yet the popish priests do offer him a thousand times every day in the year.

What now have they to say for themselves, for thus apparently contradicting the scripture in their daily service ? Why truly this is all. They confess indeed that Christ was never offered more than once, under his own form and figure, and that was upon the cross, when he shed his blood : but that he may be for all this, and is daily offered upon their altars, as really as he was that once upon the cross, under the form and figure of bread, in the which he sheds no blood.

But what horrible shuffling is this ! I will not mention here the nonsense and the impiety they are guilty of, in pretending to pen up the whole entire body and blood of Christ in one single wafer ; nay, in every crumb of that wafer, and exposing it to be devoured by rats and mice, and every thing else that can eat bread : this I shall have a further opportunity to talk of. But what monstrous equivocations, by this distinction of theirs, do they make the holy apostle to use in what he discourses on this matter ! Such equivocations as even a Jesuit would be ashamed to be taken in. He says downright, that Christ was *never to be offered but once*. Aye, but say they, his meaning is, that Christ was never to be offered but once in the same form and figure : in another form and figure the apostle allows that he is offered every day. If this be the apostle's meaning, is he not wonderfully sincere in his affirmations ? even just as sincere as I should be, if I should make oath that I never saw such a person but once in



my life ; meaning, that I never saw him but once in such a garb or habit ; but in other habits I cannot deny but that I have seen him a thousand times.

And then further ; as to what they say, that Christ's oblation upon the cross was a bloody sacrifice, (and of such the apostle speaks,) but that which they offer in the mass is a sacrifice without blood ; it is as impudent a shuffle as the other. For with what face can any Romanist say that the sacrifice of Christ, which they offer to God in the mass-service, is a sacrifice without blood ; when it is the avowed doctrine of their church, that in every crumb of bread, after consecration, there is not only the whole body of Christ, but also all his blood ; and whoever denies it, is, by a canon of the council of Trent, pronounced accursed ? Again ; if their sacrifice of the mass be a bloodless one, with what confidence dare they affirm, that it is a sacrifice propitiatory for the sins both of the dead and of the living ; when St. Paul, in express words, hath told us, that *without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins*, Heb. ix. 22. But I shall pursue this no further.

3. In the third place, as this sacrifice of the mass is without scripture, and against scripture, so it is also in the reason of the thing highly injurious to our Lord Jesus, and to that sacrifice which he once offered upon the cross to his Father ; for it mightily lessens and depreciates the value of it ; it infinitely takes away from the worth and dignity of that everlasting sacrifice that it pretends to repeat or reiterate : for if that first and eternal sacrifice, which Christ once offered upon the cross, hath all that sufficiency and all that efficacy which can be procured

by a sacrifice, nothing is left that can be done by a second. And it is an idle thing to say, that the priest offers every day a sacrifice propitiatory for the living and the dead, when all the propitiation was made by the first sacrifice ; so that at this rate the mass-service will be quite out of doors.

But if this second be needful, it must be needful upon this account, that it supplies something that was wanting in the first ; in this point one of the fathers is very full to our purpose : “ To be offered,” saith he, “ is a conviction against the sinner ; but to “ be offered more than once, is an evidence of weakness against the oblation itself.” Either therefore there must be no second oblation of Christ’s body and blood, or, if there ought to be, that second will be a reproach to the infinite value of the first, for it is grounded upon this supposition, that Christ’s oblation upon the cross was some way or other defective. The way that the Romanists take off this argument is this : They will grant, that Christ’s one oblation upon the cross was all sufficient for the procuring the pardon of the sins of the whole world ; but they say withal, this oblation is to be every day repeated, in order to the applying to particular persons the benefits that were at first obtained by it.

But how little to the purpose is this ! The notion of a propitiatory sacrifice is, that it procures the pardon of all sins to the offender. If therefore Christ’s first sacrifice did that, what need is there of another ? If the debt be once paid, there is no justice that it should be exacted again. According therefore to this their doctrine, they should not have called the sacrifice of the mass *a propitiatory* sacrifice, but *an applicatory* one. But then, for this

virtue, that they assign to this their sacrifice of applying to believers the benefits of Christ's first sacrifice, it is the strangest one that ever was heard of. The way that the scripture proposeth to us to have the benefits of Christ's passion applied to us is, the performance of several conditions on our parts; that is to say, repenting of our sins, and receiving the holy sacrament, and living an honest, godly, and Christian life. But was it ever heard, that the benefit of a sacrifice was to be applied to men by the means of offering up another sacrifice? How can any thing be applied to men, by being offered up and applied to God? It is just as if we should apply the physic, or the salves that are prescribed, not to the patient, or the wounded person, but to the physician who prescribes them.

But there is a further mystery in this applicatory sacrifice than we would perhaps at first think of; and which hath brought as much money into St. Peter's treasury, as any one trick they have ever made use of. The sacrifice of the mass, you see, is for the applying the merits of Christ's first sacrifice to particular persons. Now this sacrifice the clergy of Rome have wholly in their own hands, and can either apply it to the benefit of particular persons, or not apply it, as they please; for if they do not intend to apply it to this or the other person, it is not applied; if they do intend to apply it, then it is. The efficacy of any mass, for the pardon of the people's sins, depends upon the intention of the priest. I shall give you the words of one of their own authors: "It belongs not," saith he, "to God alone, but also to the priest, to distribute the benefit gotten by the sacrifice; because, as it is in his power to

“determine his intention, whether he will offer for  
“this or that man; so it belongs to him to deter-  
“mine to whom he will communicate what is gotten  
“by virtue of that sacrifice.” Thomas Aquinas ex-  
presseth it in fewer words: “The mass is beneficial  
“to them to whom the priest hath an intention to  
“apply it.” This now being the case, it may easily  
be supposed how convenient it is, for the getting the  
priest’s good intentions to apply the benefit of the  
sacrifice that is offered to us, to make good appli-  
cations to him beforehand.

4. But, fourthly and lastly, the sacrifice of Christ, as it is pretended daily to be offered up in the mass-service, is not only injurious to Christ’s one sacrifice, but also barbarous and inhuman. For in this sacrifice the priest pretends every day to offer up our Saviour to God his Father, as really as he offered up himself upon the cross. He pretends also not to offer him up only as a father may offer up his son, or a master his servant, but to sacrifice also, as an heathen priest doth when he sacrificeth a bull or a sheep. For this purpose he pretends, by the words of consecration, (which are but five,) to bring down Christ’s body and soul and deity, and all from the right hand of God in heaven; and to coop them up in the narrow quantity of a wafer and a little wine, where he is forced to lodge so long as that wafer is in being, and cannot in the least help himself, or get out of it. To complete this sacrifice, the priest must eat him, or rather swallow him down, for fear that if he chewed him, some crumbs might remain behind, and so the whole body be left in his mouth. This done, both the priest and the people must move God to bless them in consideration of this sacrifice, in

which they have so kindly and worthily treated his own Son : and then, lastly, both priest and people do adore what they have thus sacrificed.

This is a very plain, but true account of the sacrifice of the mass ; whether our Lord be civilly or kindly or humanly used herein, I will leave any one to judge.

These things, I dare say, which I have represented concerning the popish sacrifice, have force enough to convince any unprejudiced person that it is not a service instituted by Christ ; but that it is a great corruption and abuse and depravation of Christianity ; which was the thing I was obliged to make out.

The fourth abuse which the papists have introduced into the sacrament is, their doctrine of transubstantiation : but the treating of this I reserve to the next opportunity.



# A S E R M O N

ON

1 CORINTH. XI. 23-25.

*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

**T**HE design I am upon is, to shew the grievous corruptions and abuses that the church of Rome is guilty of in the matter of the holy communion : three of them I have already spoke to ; a fourth we now come to, and that is this : that whereas in this sacrament, according to our Saviour's institution, there is a material part and a spiritual ; a sign, and the thing signified ; the bread and wine to be received for our bodily sustenance, and the body and blood of Christ, signified by them, to be received for the food of our souls ; they have quite taken away the former from us : for they teach, that immediately upon saying the words of consecration, that which was bread and wine before, and which, according to the nature of a sacrament, now comes to be received by us, is no longer bread and wine, but is turned into the very body and blood of Christ.

And this is that mystery which they call transubstantiation ; a mystery as unintelligible as the word by which they express it ; a mystery that has always been a bone of contention among themselves when-

ever they came to a particular explication of it; and a mystery which will for ever be a wall of separation between them and the rest of mankind, that will not renounce their sense and reason.

If we were agreed with the church of Rome in all other points whatsoever, yet so long as they imposed upon us the belief of this single doctrine of transubstantiation as an article of faith, or a condition of their communion, yet we must not, we cannot ever, upon these terms, come over to them.

What the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation is, you will easily discern by these three or four canons, which I shall translate, word for word, out of the council of Trent, which is their oracle of religion.

“ If any one shall deny, that in the sacrament of the eucharist there is contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. let him be accursed,” Sess. 13. Can. 1.

“ If any one shall say, that in the sacrament there doth remain the substance of bread and wine, together with the body and blood of Christ, and shall deny the conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood [of Christ], the species or accidents only of the bread and wine remaining, which conversion or change the catholic church doth most aptly call by the name of transubstantiation, let him be accursed,” Can. 2.

“ If any shall deny, that in the sacrament the whole Christ is contained in either kind, nay, and in every part of either kind, when one part is separated from another, let him be accursed,” Can 3.

“ If any one shall say, that in the sacrament, after  
“ the words of consecration are said, there is not the  
“ body and blood of Christ, save only in the present  
“ use of them while they are taken and received, but  
“ that they are not there, either before or after ; or  
“ that the true body of Christ doth not remain in the  
“ consecrated wafers that are left, or that are re-  
“ served after the communion, let him be accursed,”  
Can. 4.

In these four canons the following points are plainly contained, which will give us a full account of their doctrine of transubstantiation.

First, that after the words of consecration are spoken, there is no bread nor no wine left upon the table.

Secondly, that though there be no bread or wine, yet the accidents, that is, the colour, the shape, the bigness, the weight, the taste, and the other qualities of the bread and wine do remain : but neither in the bread, nor in the body of Christ, but by themselves. Not in the bread, for bread there is none. Not in the body of Christ, for they will not allow you to say, that the body of Christ is round, or sweet, or white, or the like. So that here is roundless without any thing being round, whiteness without any thing being white, sweetness without any thing being sweet.

Thirdly, that in the place of the substance of bread and wine, by the virtue of five words, there is the substance of the body and blood of Christ, together with his soul and divinity ; though it is confessed at the same time, that Christ hath but one body, and that body is in heaven.

Fourthly, that this body and blood, as it is whole

in the whole bread and wine, and as both body and blood are whole in the bread alone, so it is whole also in every crumb of that bread; which doth admirably consist with the notion of a body.

Fifthly, the body of Christ is eaten by every communicant both good and bad.

Sixthly, not only so, but this body remains in those wafers that are not eaten; so that if after the sacrament a mouse should happen to come at one of these wafers and devour it, it would as really eat the body of Christ as any Christian. And if one of these wafers should be burnt with fire, why then the body of Christ would be as really burnt as it was before eaten. These things cannot be prevented, but by as great a miracle as the first production of the body was.

Seventhly and lastly, this change, this conversion of the whole substance of bread and wine into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ, together with his soul and divinity, is most aptly by the catholic church called *transubstantiation*.

By this account I have given you, you may in some measure discover what that hard word means, and what the doctrine of the church of Rome is in this matter.

My business now should be to shew the absurdity of this doctrine: but I dare say the very shewing you what it is, and the naming to you the several propositions contained in it, will be sufficient to keep every unbiassed person from easily giving his assent to it. He must be of a very strong constitution that can swallow down and digest such pills as are here offered to him, unless education, or interest, or a blind submission to others, have already made them familiar to him. I dare be bold to say, there never

was any mystery in any religion in the world so unintelligible, so unconceivable, so contradictory, so every way both against sense and reason, as this is. No Jew, no Turk, no Pagan, so far as we can learn from history, ever had in their creeds an article so hard to be believed.

If this had been the doctrine of our blessed Lord and his apostles, sure he had never drawn the world over to his religion: but even his own disciples would have done as they of Capernaum did, when they took his saying (John vi.) about *eating his flesh and drinking his blood* in a literal sense; (just as the Romanists now do;) they would have departed from him.

I say not this to put any affront either on the persons, or the parts, or the honesty of those that are otherwise persuaded, and do believe as the Roman church teacheth; for I know very well how far education and prejudice, and want of consideration, may prevail, even upon good men, for the perverting their judgments in the plainest matters; especially when these are backed with this fatal principle, that they are bound, under pain of damnation, to believe as the church believes; and that the more difficult the thing is to be believed, the more meritorious is their faith: I say, I have nothing to say to the men who do believe transubstantiation, nor do I call their Christianity into question upon that account; but, for the thing itself, it is fit, it is just, we should freely reprove it. For certainly there is no doctrine in the world that either more deserves to be, or is more capable of being, exposed and made ridiculous than this is; and it hath already been sufficiently made so by as many as have attempted it.

If we should pursue those several propositions I



have named to their several consequences, what a bundle of monstrous absurdities and gross contradictions should we find in them ! but this method of arguing against transubstantiation I do not think so proper in this place, because it would engage us in a discourse too subtle for ordinary capacities ; and I would, if I could, speak to the meanest understandings.

Letting pass therefore the absurdities and contradictions which follow upon this doctrine of transubstantiation, and which the Romanists themselves will not pretend to answer, all of them, I will endeavour these three things :

First, to shew that the doctrine of transubstantiation is so far from having any countenance from scripture, particularly from the words of Christ in the institution, [*This is my body,*] which is the great argument the Romanists bring for it, and the foundation upon which they build it ; that, if there were no other argument against it but that, it would from hence be effectually overthrown.

Secondly, to shew the danger of this artifice, forasmuch as it overthrows the evidence of the whole Christian religion. If the doctrine of transubstantiation be true, it can never be proved that Christianity is true.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to shew the insufficiency of that plea or apology which the Romanists usually make for their doctrine of transubstantiation, that is, the unaccountableness and unconceivableness of several other of the Gospel-doctrines ; from whence they conclude, that we ought not to reject the doctrine of transubstantiation upon this account, that it is hard or unintelligible, or seemingly contradictory.

Of these three points in their order ; and the first of them will, I believe, take up my whole time at present.

The great, if not the only argument of the Romanists for transubstantiation is, our Saviour's words when he instituted the sacrament ; which they think to be so full and flat for the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, that they wonder with what face any protestant can deny it. Doth not our Saviour most expressly say, when he gave the sacrament under the form of bread, *Take, eat : this is my body* ? Doth he not likewise say of the cup, that it is his blood ? If ever it was needful that our Saviour should speak plain, and without a figure, one would think it should be then, when he instituted this so solemn, and perpetual, and principal a sacrament of the Christian church. And what can be more plain, than what he hath spoken concerning it ? Shall we therefore believe Jesus Christ, or shall we believe our own carnal reason against him ? No sure. Every Christian ought to submit his reason to Christ's revelation, for his reason is infinitely fallible ; but Christ can neither deceive nor be deceived. To the *word* therefore, *and to the testimony*, which is your own protestant rule. Christ hath said of the bread, *This is my body* : and therefore certainly it is so, whatever our senses or our reason can suggest to the belief of the contrary.

This is the argument ; and thus far indeed it proceeds right, that whatever Christ said we are to believe, and likewise that Christ did speak sufficiently plain to his disciples when he instituted this holy sacrament : neither of these will any protestant deny. And therefore we do as firmly believe as we believe

any thing, that when Christ spake those words, *This is my body*, he spake nothing but what was both true, and very plain and obvious unto those to whom he spake: but the question is, whether these words of his, even in their most plain and obvious sense, do make any thing for the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation? They say they do; we say they do not. Here therefore we are to join issue.

And here we are ready to prove, (if that will satisfy,) that they not only make nothing for transubstantiation, but quite overthrow it; that the sense that the protestants expound them in is far the plainest and easiest, and most natural and proper; nay, that it is impossible they should be expounded to any other sense. On the contrary, that the Romish sense is harsh and forced, and makes our Saviour to talk against all the rules of speech.

For the finding out the meaning of our Saviour's proposition, *This is my body*, the true way will be first to fix the sense of the two terms of it; that is to say, what he means when he says *this*, and what he means by *his body*. Now of the sense of these two terms we may be as fully ascertained from what goes before, and from what follows after, as we can be of the sense of any words in scripture.

- When we use the word *this* in any speech of ours, all the world knows that we do, as with the finger, point to something that is present, which we would have those we speak to take notice of. If I have a Bible in my hand, and hold it forth to you, and say, This is the word of God, would you not all think that I spoke of the book which I had in my hand, and shewed you? Certainly you would. When our Saviour therefore said to his disciples,

*This is my body*, he meant to shew something to them that was present; and accordingly we find, that something he had in his hand, and that was bread. The Lord Jesus, as my text tells you, after supper took bread: he blessed this bread; he breaks this bread after he had blessed it; he gives this bread to his disciples after he had broken it; he bids them take and eat of this bread; and, to oblige them so to do, he adds, for *this is my body*. What now, according to the common language of mankind, is it that our Saviour saith is his body? Must it not of necessity be that which he had in his hand, and which he had blessed, and broken, and bid them eat of? If any thing can be concluded from words, it must be concluded, that when our Saviour saith, *This is my body*, he speaks of the bread he had blessed and broken; and it is impossible the apostles should understand him otherwise.

But if this be not sufficient to prove that our Saviour, when he said, *This is my body*, spoke of the consecrated bread, let us add the testimony of St. Paul, who sure is an infallible interpreter of our Saviour's words. Our Saviour tells his disciples, that what he had commanded them to eat was his body: this is agreed on all hands. If now we will inquire of St. Paul, what it is that is eaten in the holy supper, he will inform us plainly that it is bread: three times he tells us so in the verses immediately following my text: *As often*, says he, *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup*, ver. 26. *Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily*, ver. 27. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat this bread and drink this cup*, ver. 28.

Here now is the argument: Our Saviour having

consecrated the bread, bids his disciples eat of it, telling them, it was his *body*. St. Paul saith, that what is eaten in the sacrament is *bread*. From hence therefore it undeniably follows, that the consecrated bread is that which our Saviour calls his body ; and that, when he saith, *This is my body*, it is as much as if he had said, This bread, which I have blessed and broken, and which I give you, this bread is my body.

Having now fixed this as a firm, undeniable principle that we may safely build upon, let us proceed to the other term in our Saviour's proposition, *my body*. Now in what sense, or under what consideration the word *body* is here to be taken, is as clear from our Saviour's words as the former thing we were speaking of. The Romanists do indeed darken the sense of this proposition, by leaving out half of it ; they only say, *This is my body*. Here they break off. But the entire sentence is this : *This is my body given for you*, or, *This is my body broken for you*. From hence we may plainly gather, that our Saviour doth not speak of his body absolutely, and without a qualification, but under this particular consideration, *his body as given for us* ; that is, as offered up to God in sacrifice for us ; (as the scriptures often explain that term ;) *his body broken for us* ; that is, deprived of life for our sakes.

My plain meaning is, that Christ never said simply of the bread, *This is my body* ; but, *This is my body given*, or *broken for you* ; that is, he hath plainly declared, that the bread of the communion is his body, not living, but dead in our stead. Which is further confirmed by what Christ saith of the cup, that it is *the blood of the new covenant shed for*



*them.* It was not in any other sense his blood, than as it was *shed for the remission of sins.*

Taking now these two things to be sufficiently proved, and never to be called in question again, I come to the main question between us and the papists; and that is, in what sense these two terms we have been explaining are coupled together; or, to speak plainer, in what sense our Saviour said of the consecrated bread, that it was his dead body. Here begins the great quarrel between them and us; they contend for a direct literal sense; we say our Saviour here speaks by a figure; but yet such a figure as is most common, and which every one, upon the pronouncing of the words, would easily understand. They understand our Saviour in the same sense as they would do one, who (for instance) should point to the king's person, and say, *This is the king.* We understand our Saviour in the same sense as we should do one who, having the king's picture in his hand, should say, *This is the king.* The proposition is the same in the mouths of both those persons; but yet we see it hath a quite different signification as it is spoken by the one, and as it is spoken by the other. Whether of these senses come nearer to truth, and to our Saviour's meaning, the literal or the figurative, theirs or ours, we are now to examine: but we are to examine them by these two principles which we have already proved, and now take for granted; and which I desire you would keep in memory, viz. that when our Saviour said, *This is my body*, he spoke of the bread; and when he said, that the bread was his body, he spoke of his body not living, but sacrificed for our redemption.

Now, taking these things along with us, the two following consequences will be evident.

First of all, that their sense of the words, and by which alone they can prove transubstantiation, is impossible, and full of nonsense and contradictions.

And, secondly, that the sense in which the protestants understand our Saviour's words is very natural and easy, and agreeable to the common way of speaking; and the only sense in which it was possible for the apostles, to whom our Lord spoke, to understand them.

1. First of all, the popish gloss upon these words supposes things impossible and contradictory. For first,

(1.) If we take our Saviour's words in the literal sense, that is, in the sense of the Romanists, we must make him speak to this effect: This bread which I have blessed and broken, and commanded you to eat of, is not bread, but really and truly my dead body; my body sacrificed for you. Now I will appeal to you, whether this be not perfect nonsense; and whether it was not impossible that the disciples, to whom he spoke, should thus understand him. For what is this, but to make our Saviour say and unsay the same thing at the same time? He speaks of the bread which he had blessed and broken, when he pronounceth the word *this*, and they all knew it to be bread; and yet, according to the Romanists, he must be supposed to mean that it was not bread, but merely his body; for, they say, when once it becomes the body of Christ it is no longer bread.

There is nothing in the world by which they can shift off this contradiction, but by saying thus, (as

indeed they do say it,) that when our Saviour spoke the word *this*, that which he had in his hands, or then gave unto them to eat, was indeed bread; but by that time he had finished his sentence, then it was no longer bread, but his very body.

But this will stand them in no stead at all. For though hereby they may avoid the contradiction, yet they make our Saviour to speak, not only against the rules of all grammar, but to speak a flat untruth. For he says, in the present tense, this bread *is* my body, when yet, when he begun to speak so, the bread was not his body, but only was presently to be turned into his body. If indeed he had said, this bread *will be* my body as soon as I have done speaking these words, he then might have been supposed to have spoken something to the purpose of transubstantiation. But he speaks in the present time, *this is*, not *this will be*; and if they will be bold to change the tenses, then they keep not to the letter of the words, but have recourse to a figure; and a figure far more unusual in these kind of speeches, than that we contend is here made use of. When therefore our Saviour says, *This is my body*, his proposition cannot possibly be taken in a literal sense, without making him either to speak a contradiction, or to speak that which is false. Unless it can be made to appear that bread and our Saviour's body are one and the same thing, which no man in the world ever yet asserted.

(2.) But, secondly, let us suppose, if we can, as they would have us, that when Christ had said these words, *This is my body*, that which he had in his hands was no longer bread, but became his very body; yet there is this question still behind, How

could it be his dead body? his body given, or broken, or sacrificed for them?

That our Saviour spake of his body in that condition, and under that consideration only, I have already shewed; and that his disciples understood him so, there is no doubt. But if they did, how is it possible they should understand his words in a literal sense?

Christ said to them, *This is my body*. Not my body living, but my body dead and broken for you. His disciples who heard these words, saw and knew that the person who spoke them was alive, that his body was not yet broken, nor his blood shed. What shall we say? Must they understand his words literally, as the papists would have them understood, or no? If they did, they must admit of as gross a contradiction as ever was put upon mankind. They must believe that Christ's body was both alive and dead at the same time. If they could not believe this, as certainly one of us would think they could not, then it is impossible they should take our Saviour's words in a literal sense, viz. that the bread he gave them was really and truly, and without any figure, his very dead body.

If they did not take them in a literal sense, then it is certain they understood them in a figurative, which is that which we protestants contend for. Which figurative sense, how natural, how easy, how unexceptionable it is, and how impossible it is that the apostles should miss of it, I come, in the next place, to shew.

2. Our Saviour in his last supper with his apostles, takes bread, and blesseth it, and breaketh it, and distributes it to his several disciples, and bids

them eat it, telling them it was his body, his body broken for them : when yet all those disciples knew and saw that he was alive, and present with them when he spoke those words. If now we had been in their places, how should we have understood those words? Certainly not in a literal, but a figurative sense. And what figure should we have thought of besides that way of speaking whereby we give to the sign the thing signified by the sign. Now according to this figure we should have understood the words to this effect ; that this bread which he had broken and blessed, did shew forth and represent his body broken for us ; and by our eating of this broken bread, according to his command, we were made partakers of the benefits of his sacrificed body. No sense in the world can be more easy than this. Nay, all things considered, it is impossible, supposing the apostles to have but common sense and understanding, and to mind what they were about, that they should take the words in any other.

(1.) For first of all, there is no figure in speech more usual among mankind in all languages than this, whereby we give to the sign the name of the thing signified. Is there any phrase more common than when we shew a picture of any one to say, This is such a person ; or when we have a map before us, to say, This is such or such a country. When these expressions are used, there is none so silly as to believe that we mean that piece of painting is really the person of the king, for instance, or the queen, whom it represents ; or that map is really the country of France or Spain, or the like. But we all, even the most simple of us, do understand



that we give the name of the person or thing represented to that which represents it.

(2.) But, secondly, as this is an ordinary figure in common speech, so it is also in the language of scripture. Innumerable are the passages that I might quote, both out of the Old and New Testament, to shew that the sign or figure of a thing is called by the name of the thing itself. Thus for instance, when Joseph expounded Pharaoh's dream, *The seven fat kine, says he, are seven years. The seven ears of corn are seven years*, Gen. xli. 26. Thus when Daniel unfolded to Nebuchadnezzar his dreams of the great image and of the tree: *Thou art this head of gold, says he, and the tree which thou sawest, it is thou, O king*, Dan. ii. 38. iv. 20. 22.

Thus also, in the New Testament, our Saviour never fails thus to express himself upon the like occasions; as in the parable of the tares: *The field, saith he, Matt. xiii. 38, 39, is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the Devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. And thus when he speaks of himself; I am the door, I am the vine, I am the good shepherd*, John x. 7. xv. 1. x. 14. And thus also St. Paul; *That rock was Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 4.

By these, and a great many other instances that might be given, you may be convinced that when the holy scriptures would express the representation of one thing by another, they do not do it in such terms as these; Such a thing is the sign, or the figure, or the representation of such a thing; which is the literal way of expressing; but in a much

shorter manner ; Such a thing *is* such a thing ; giving to the sign or the figure the name of the thing which it represents or signifies. And why, when our Saviour saith, *This is my body*, he should not be thought to use the same style and expression, (especially when all other senses of the phrase are, as I have shewn, full of absurdities and contradictions,) there is no imaginable reason to be given.

(3.) But, thirdly, that he must be supposed to speak in this language, and that his disciples so understood him, there is this further argument ; because this was the language that was used by the Jews in their sacraments, and particularly in that sacrament that the apostles had just then celebrated.

And indeed great reason there was that they should speak in this style ; for if the signs may be well called by the name of the things they signify, (as we have shewn they often are,) then much more may those sacred ceremonies, which we term sacraments, be so called ; for these are more than bare, empty signs, they are seals too ; they assure to the worthy partakers the truth and reality of those things they represent ; they effectually communicate the things themselves.

Two eminent sacraments God appointed to the Jews, circumcision and the passover ; yet to both these the holy scriptures, and the Jews from them, gave the name of the thing which they signified and sealed. Circumcision, which was no more than the sign and seal of God's covenant with the Jews, answering to our baptism, yet is in scripture called *the covenant* itself. Thus, twice in one chapter, Gen. xvii. 10. 13. God saith, *This is my covenant*,

*every male child among you shall be circumcised.* And again, *My covenant shall be in your flesh.* Whereas every body knows that circumcision was not God's covenant, but the sign of the covenant, or the sacrament whereby they entered into covenant.

And then for the other sacrament, the paschal feast, from whence our Saviour took his sacrament of the Lord's supper, the very name of *passover*, by which it is called, is an instance of the figure we are contending for. For the sacrificed lamb, with which the Jews celebrated this sacrament, was not the passover itself, but only a sign or memorial of it; for the passover was God's actual passing over the Israelites when he slew the Egyptian firstborn, which was done when they came out of Egypt; yet, you see, God himself calls this feast *the Lord's passover*. *This is*, says he, *the Lord's passover*, Exod. xii. 11. And for ever after, every year, this paschal feast was kept, (which was as long as the Jewish polity lasted,) when the lamb was set upon the table, the master of the house spoke to his company in these words: *This is the passover, which we therefore eat, because God passed by our houses in Egypt.* And this form of words, without doubt, our Saviour used when he kept this feast with his disciples.

But now all that were present knew that the lamb upon the table was not really the Lord's passover, for that was a deliverance that God wrought for them but once, and that many hundreds of years before; but only a memorial of that passover; a sacrament instituted for the commemoration of that deliverance, or that passover.

Taking now this for granted, as we have sufficient

reason, since God, in scripture, first used the expression; and the Jewish rituals tell us, that in all succeeding passovers it was continued, who can doubt but the apostles, when they heard our Saviour say of the bread, *This is my body*, would naturally be led to understand the words in the sense we have been declaring, though there was nothing to induce them to it but what we have just now said. The apostles, at that time, were celebrating the Jewish sacrament of the paschal feast, which was a commemoration of a deliverance past, viz. that great redemption which God had wrought for them from the Egyptian bondage; yet they heard our Saviour say of the bread, *This is the bread of affliction which your fathers eat in Egypt*. They heard him say of the flesh upon the table, *This is the Lord's passover*. Well, after they had finished this sacrament, they saw our Saviour take of the same bread again, and bless it as he had done before; (but with a design to make a new sacrament, wherein both they and all Christians after them should commemorate the death and sacrifice of the paschal Lamb, of which the other was a type; by which sacrifice a deliverance was wrought for all true Israelites, to the world's end, out of the spiritual bondage of sin and Satan.) Having, I say, thus *blessed the bread*, he bids them *eat of it*; and tells them, *This is his body broken for them*. I dare now appeal to any, whether they would not naturally understand this latter expression of his in the same sense that they did the former; that is to say, that the bread that Christ now blessed, and broke, was just as much his body broken, as the bread they had before eaten was the bread of affliction which their fathers eat in

Egypt; or, as the lamb they had before eaten of, was the Lord's passover. It has this only difference, that the paschal lamb was a commemoration of a thing past, but the new sacrament was a commemoration of something that was yet to come; for Christ had not then actually broken his body, or shed his blood, but was suddenly so to do: this excepted, the other things are the same. And we may as well imagine, that when those words of the Jewish ritual, *This is the Lord's passover*, were spoken, the disciples understood that just then the destroying angel was passing over the houses of the Israelites, and slaying the firstborn of the Egyptians; as we can imagine, that when our Saviour said, *This is my body broken for you*, they understood him of his real, natural body, which was not then crucified: and consequently therefore they took not his expression literally, (as the papists do,) but in the same figure that was so usual among them.

I think now that I have fully made out that Christ's words in the institution, *This is my body*, are so far from making any thing for the doctrine of transubstantiation, that they do effectually overthrow it; and that it is impossible that the apostles should understand them in any other sense than we protestants now understand them.

I am sensible I have been very tedious in this business; but my endeavours to speak plainly and convincingly have made me so——All that I have further to add is this, that although we thus interpret our Saviour's words, and though thus, without doubt, they who heard him speak did understand them; yet are we far from believing or imagining that the bread and wine in the sacrament are only



empty signs, or figures, or representations of Christ's body and blood. On the contrary, we believe, that although they do not change their natures, but still continue bread and wine, yet they do really and effectually convey, to all worthy receivers, all the benefits and virtues of Christ's body that was broken, and of his blood that was shed. Though his body be in heaven, and not here, yet he is, by his Spirit, really present in and with all those who do worthily partake of his sacrament, in order to the strengthening and refreshing their souls by his influence, as our bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine. And this is all that we mean by the real presence in the sacrament.

# A S E R M O N

ON

1 CORINTH. XI. 23-25.

*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

YOU may easily remember the argument I am upon; it is the shewing (amongst other errors of the church of Rome, in the matter of the holy communion) the great abuse they have put upon us by their doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine, the last time, I largely explained to you from the council of Trent; and gave an account, briefly, of the several absurdities and contradictions it contained in it. Having done this, the method that I pitched upon for shewing the groundlessness of the Romish doctrine of the conversion of the bread and wine of the sacrament into the very body and blood of Christ, was as follows: To shew that this doctrine of transubstantiation is so far from having any countenance from the words of our Saviour's institution, that if there was no other argument against it but those words, it would, from thence, be effectually overthrown.

And here it was my business to inquire into the

sense of our Saviour's words, *This is my body*. And two things I undertook to prove :

First, That the Romanists, who contend for a literal sense of the words, cannot possibly be in the right. On the contrary, our Saviour's words are so far from making for their doctrine of transubstantiation, that they are an effectual confutation of it.

Secondly, That the sense that the protestants give of those words is the most natural and easy, though it be a figurative one ; and such a sense it is, as it cannot be imagined but they who were present when our Saviour spoke the words must naturally and necessarily hit upon, and understand him in.

Thus far I have already gone. What I further proposed to shew was, the danger of this article of transubstantiation, forasmuch as it overthrows the evidence of the whole Christian religion ; and the insufficiency of that plea or apology which the papists usually make for this doctrine, from the unaccountableness and inconceivableness of other gospel doctrines ; as that of the Trinity and Incarnation.

For the two things which are commonly said by the papists, not so much by way of answering our arguments, (for that is despaired of,) as for taking us off from laying so great a stress upon this point as we are wont to do, are these :

First of all, it is insinuated frequently by them, that whether the church of Rome be right or wrong in this matter, yet it is no great business. The controversy is wholly upon a matter of speculation. If they should be mistaken in their notions, yet what is the evil consequence ? there is nothing of practice depends upon the believing or the not believing their doctrine. I may live as well, and serve God

as well, though I do believe transubstantiation, or do not believe it. And can we think that a mere speculative point, that hath no influence upon our practice, should be worth so hotly contending for?

This is one thing that is said: and then another thing, that is often thrown upon us, is this: Why are we so incredulous about this doctrine of the church? Why do we stand so much upon the reason of the thing? Will we believe nothing but what is fully made out to us by reason? Do not we believe abundance of points that are as much above our reason as transubstantiation is? If we will not believe articles of faith till we can satisfy ourselves about the reasonableness of every one of them, we must be unbelievers all the days of our life. The doctrine of transubstantiation seems to be impossible, and therefore we reject it; but must we not, upon the same pretence, reject the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the resurrection, and several other articles of faith? For these are every whit as impossible to our reason as their doctrine is.

These two things are frequently made use of, to beat us from our hold; and indeed by this artifice they have done some considerable advantage to their cause, by imposing upon unwary, unthinking men, that this point of transubstantiation is either not so necessary or not so incredible, as to deserve such a mighty bustle and controversy as we make about it. I think it will not be labour lost to give some answer to them.

1. I begin with the first. It is pretended, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is wholly a speculative point; that our practice is noways concerned in it; and therefore though it should be an error, yet what

great matter is it for a man to be mistaken? will a pure mistake of a man's understanding, so long as he believes as rightly as he can, be any bar to his salvation at the last day? Why then do we make such a noise and clamour about this doctrine, since it so little concerns our salvation?

(1.) To this I say first of all; Suppose it to be merely a speculative error, and noways to influence upon our practice, yet they themselves have laid so great stress upon it, that we must for ever continue in the same distance from them that we do, unless they would mollify their terms of communion. Be the error ever so small in itself, yet they have made the believing of it an article of faith, and necessary to salvation. It is one of those twelve articles which the pope, by the order of the council of Trent, hath added to the Apostles' Creed. And wherever that council is received, every clergyman among them is bound not only to subscribe, but to swear his belief of this, and all those other additions; and they do not only swear for themselves, but they are bound by their oath to teach and instruct the people in this faith, as that faith without which no man can be saved. So that be the matter never so small in itself, they have made it a great business. Every man who hath cure of souls, takes an oath that he believes the doctrine of transubstantiation himself as a necessary article of the Christian faith; and that he will do his utmost endeavour that all those who are under his care should believe so likewise.

I say nothing but what is true, as any man will be convinced who will be at the pains to read over pope Pius the Fourth's bull, at the end of the council of Trent, concerning the form of the oath of profession



of faith. Is there now any dallying in such a matter as this? Was it ten times of less consequence than it is, yet we ought to be careful of professing this doctrine as an article of faith, when we believe it to be an error; and much more of swearing to the belief of it. If it was a matter of no moment before, they have now made it to be a matter of infinite moment; for now no man can be honest, or a good Christian, who doth not entirely swallow this hard pill of transubstantiation: but this is not all.

(2.) For, in the second place, I desire this may be considered. It is said that the doctrine of transubstantiation, if it be an error, is only a speculative one, and hath no influence upon practice. This is said; but it is utterly false: for no less follows upon this belief than the committing of idolatry; and sure no wise man will say, but that idolatry is a matter of practice which it infinitely concerns every Christian to avoid. The mistakes about the presence of Christ's body, if they terminated there, would not be so very dangerous; but they draw after them such fearful consequences, as to matter of divine worship, that no man who hath the least care of his soul, but will think himself extremely concerned to inform himself rightly. What can be greater or grosser idolatry in the world than to worship and perform divine adoration to a piece of bread, as if it was very God Almighty? Yet this practice the doctrine of transubstantiation doth necessarily and unavoidably bring us to. If the consecrated bread be really Christ's body, and his soul and deity be hypostatically united therewith, (as they all teach,) then I cannot see but that we are bound to perform divine worship to the elements in the sacrament, or to that

which in common speech we protestants call bread and wine. And accordingly, in pursuance of this doctrine of transubstantiation, all the papists universally do actually worship the bread and wine in the sacrament as very God Almighty, and are bound by the laws of their religion so to do.

But what now if transubstantiation be an error, in what a case are they then? Are they not the most gross idolaters? Such they are, or there hath never been any idolatry in the world. And this they themselves have been so aware of, that one of their Jesuits scruples not to affirm, “that if the doctrine of transubstantiation be not true, the Christians of the Roman communion are as great idolaters in worshipping the host, as the Indians are in worshipping a red cloth, for God Almighty.” If now this be the natural and necessary consequence of transubstantiation, is it such a light matter that we should take no notice of it, but put it among the disputes and controversies of the schools, which it is not a farthing matter whether we believe on the one side or the other?

(3.) But further yet; I have this, in the third place, to represent in answer to their suggestion. They say the doctrine of transubstantiation is but a matter of mere speculation. Be it so: but yet this we say, it is such a matter of speculation, that if it be once admitted, it will shake the very foundations of Christianity, and be in danger of overthrowing the evidence of our whole religion. And therefore certainly it is not so light, but that great stress should be laid upon it. And this being one of the principal points I undertook to speak to, I shall therefore consider it more fully.

We say, that the very supposing transubstantiation destroys those grounds upon which we do believe our Saviour's doctrine. If this popish tenet be true, it is impossible for us ever to be assured ourselves, or to be able to assure others, that Christianity is true.

This, you will say, is a very heavy charge : but in truth, as heavy as it is, it may be very evidently made good. For I would ask, what are the grounds upon which any of us do believe the Christian faith, or would persuade others to believe it? If we would answer reasonably, we must say thus : The ground upon which we believe Christ's religion, is the testimony of the apostles and other honest men who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, and heard him publish his doctrine, and were witnesses of the proofs he gave of it : which doctrine and which proofs they timely committed to writing, and those writings we may safely believe, upon the credit and authority of universal tradition, to be sincerely conveyed down to us. This is the direct answer to this question ; not denying, in the mean while, that there are a great many other collateral evidences of the truth of Christianity, though all depending on the same foundation. Well, but upon this question thus answered there ariseth another. All the truth of our belief dependeth on the truth of the apostles and other first witnesses their belief. If they were mistaken, then are we too. Now how shall we be sure that they were not imposed upon? All the answer now that can be given to this question is this : It is impossible the apostles and other witnesses of Christ's actions and doctrines should be mistaken, for they had the evidence of their senses for what they believed, and what they

reported to us. They heard Christ with their own ears preaching such doctrines as we now call the articles of our faith, which doctrines their reason told them were good in themselves, and agreeable to the doctrine of the prophets. They likewise saw with their eyes the proofs that Christ gave of them, being present at the mighty miracles he wrought. Seeing him cast out devils, raise the dead, cure all diseases, and giving all other evidences of a divine power in him. Lastly, after they had seen him put to death, they had all their senses to witness that he was raised again from the dead, and conversed with them for many days.

Here therefore we are to fix the first grounds of our faith, viz. upon the evidence of our sense. The apostles, and those other first Christians who conveyed our religion down to us, did therefore believe, because they saw and heard and felt; and upon the credit of those their senses they were assured, that what they delivered to posterity concerning Jesus and his religion was true. And indeed it is impossible there should be any other evidence than this for the truth of any divine revelation, let it be of what nature it will; it is into this proposition, that our senses do not deceive us, that we are at last to resolve all the arguments we have for the truth or credibility of any revealed religion. And accordingly we find the arguments of the apostles, when they would persuade men to Christianity, always proceed upon this ground. They were eye and *earwitnesses of what Jesus did and taught*, Luke i 2. 4. and of his resurrection from the dead; and therefore they durst avow to all the world that he was the Messiah. *That which was from the be-*

*ginning, saith St. John, 1 Ep. i. 1, 5. that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, that we declare unto you.*

This now being taken for granted, we thus form our argument. If the ground of our faith be the truth of our senses, whoever teacheth any doctrine that supposeth our senses may be deceived, doth, so far as he teacheth it, overthrow the ground of our faith. Or to put it plainer : If the last reason for which we believe the truth of the Christian doctrine be founded in this proposition, that we are to believe our senses ; then that doctrine which supposes that we are not to believe our senses, doth quite overthrow the reason and ground of our belief. But the doctrine of transubstantiation, as it is maintained by the papists, doth quite take away the credit of our senses ; for it teacheth, that that which to all our senses (when we make the best use of them that is possible) appears to be plain bread and wine, as much as any bread and wine in the world can appear to be so, is yet really not bread and wine, but a quite different thing, even the body and blood of Christ which is in heaven. Upon these premises, I say, that doctrine thus teaching, must be concluded to take quite away all the evidence we have for our belief of Christianity : if this doctrine be true, then could not the apostles or any others be certain that what they thought they saw and heard concerning Jesus Christ was true, and consequently much less could they persuade others they preached to, that what they taught concerning him was true, and least of all us who live at this distance of time.

I will make this a little plainer if I can : We will



suppose, as the doctors of the Roman church would have us, that transubstantiation was a doctrine of our Saviour's which he taught the apostles, and that they were to teach it to others as an article of faith. And accordingly we will suppose, that one of them is endeavouring to bring a heathen over to the Christian religion. The man, as is but reasonable, first desires to hear an account of this religion he would persuade him to. The apostle thereupon declares to him the articles of the Christian faith, and among the rest he tells him that one article is, that in every Christian sacrament of the eucharist, when five words are said by the priest, that which appears to him a small round wafer, and hath, if he may believe his senses, all the other characters of a wafer, yet is not a wafer, but the true natural body and blood of Christ, who was crucified at Jerusalem. The man mightily sticks at this, as he hath good reason: "Sir," saith he, "this is a very hard doctrine to be believed. I cannot for my life distrust the evidence of my senses; I must believe what I see, and what I taste, and what I feel; and besides, it is very hard to conceive, in reason, how the whole proportion of the body of a man can be crowded into so small a bulk as a wafer bears. Ay, but (says the apostle) Christ, who was truth itself, and could not deceive, nor be deceived, he hath said that *this is my body*, when he had given bread to his disciples to eat. You ought not therefore to urge your senses against so infallible an authority. Right, (saith the man,) if I were convinced that all Christ said was true, and that he was an infallible teacher sent from God, I would do what I could to swallow this hard pill, the belief that bread is an

“ human body, though it be against the grain of my  
“ senses : but how shall I be assured that your Jesus  
“ was so infallible an oracle as you speak him ? ”

What now can the preacher, whoever he be, reply to him more than this, that he hath been conversant with our Saviour all the time that he lived ; that he saw his actions and heard his doctrines, and that they were both exactly framed according to the characters that God had before given of the Messiah in the Law and in the Prophets ; that he was present at those testimonies that God, by voices from heaven, gave to his Son Jesus ; that he had seen him work such miracles as were plainly the seal of God to the truth of his mission ; and, lastly, that he had seen him rise from the dead, and visibly ascend into heaven. These now, I grant, are undeniable arguments of the divinity and truth of our Saviour. But whether will the pagan be satisfied with them ? may he not justly thus reply ? “ Sir, it cannot be denied  
“ but that you speak great and glorious things of  
“ your crucified Jesus ; but yet, if you mind, all the  
“ arguments that you bring for the truth of his religion are, that you have heard and seen such  
“ wonderful proofs of it. So it seems you lay a great  
“ stress upon your hearing and seeing, and your  
“ other senses, and you would have me do so too.  
“ But may not I as much trust to my own senses as  
“ to yours ? will you pretend to persuade me that  
“ I should believe your senses, when at the same  
“ time you forbid me to believe my own ? I am as  
“ certain, by my eyes and smell and handling, that  
“ what you call the body of Christ is no more than  
“ a piece of bread, as you can be certain that ever  
“ you heard a voice from heaven in attestation that

“ Jesus was the Son of God ; or, as you can be certain that ever you saw him work any miracles ; or, as you can be certain that ever you heard him speak, or touched him, or conversed with him after he rose from the dead. You have no other evidence but your senses for the truth of what you would persuade me to, the Christian religion. I have the same evidence against the truth of what you would persuade me to, the doctrine of transubstantiation. If your senses may be believed, why may not mine ? If both our senses may not be believed in one matter, then why should they be believed in another ? ”

This is a very familiar, but a true representation of the case. And I would gladly know how any papist in the world, that owns transubstantiation, (as every papist must do,) can take off this argument.

The conclusion therefore is, that if transubstantiation be true, it can never be made to appear that Christianity is true ; because transubstantiation being supposed, the credit of our senses is taken away ; and yet upon their credit our belief of Christianity is founded.

But to this the Romanists say, that our senses, in the business of the sacrament, are noways abused or deceived. Whatever is the proper object of our senses, is, in the consecrated bread, left entire. That which appears to our eyes to be white and round, is really so ; that which to our taste appears to have the relish of bread, hath really that relish ; and so of the other objects of our senses. All the mistake, say they, lies here : our senses represent truly, but we, in our minds, are apt to form a wrong

judgment of the thing that is conveyed under these sensible qualities. We are not deceived in the objects of our senses, but we may be deceived by the substances that are conveyed under those objects.

This is all that I know they have to defend themselves with against the argument I have been urging: but in truth, if you will well consider it, it signifies nothing at all to the purpose. The question is not, whether there be really such impressions made to our outward senses as we find ourselves sensible of, (for that nobody denies,) but whether, when such impressions are made to our senses, and we use our senses, not one singly, but all of them together, to try the matter by, and we add our reason to boot, and this in a matter that is as much the object of sense as any in the world; I say, the question is, whether, in this case, we may not, by the help of our senses, make a true judgment of the object; or rather, whether we ought not, all things duly examined by our reason which our senses offer us, give judgment according to the import of our senses? We say, we ought to do so; the papists say, we ought not: but in so saying, they quite overturn the credit and evidence of all sense; for at this rate of talking no man can be assured that any thing he sees is the thing he takes it to be; or that any thing he tastes is the thing he fancieth it; and so of the rest.

But they say further to this: It is true, in all other cases our senses (especially when we make use of all of them, and call our reason in to their assistance) are to be believed; only there is a particular exception in this case of the consecrated bread and wine, because Christ, who cannot lie, hath pro-

nounced them to be his body and blood. But to this we reply, that Christ hath nowhere pronounced so; but his words import directly the contrary, as, I think, we have already sufficiently proved.

2. But I hasten to the other thing which I was to insist upon; and that is, the insufficiency of that plea or apology which the papists usually make for their doctrine of transubstantiation, from the unaccountableness or inconceivableness of several others of our Saviour's doctrines.

Whenever we urge to them the unintelligibleness or contradictions of this their tenet, that which they think to stop our mouths with is this: "Will you be a Christian, or will you not? If you will, then you must be led by faith, and not by sense. You must believe what God hath said, and not what your own carnal, fallible reason suggests: you cannot conceive how that which appears bread, should be the true, real body of Christ which is in heaven. Why, can you conceive any better of many of the mysteries of Christianity? Is not the incarnation of our Saviour, the manner how God and man can be one person, every whit as great and as unaccountable a secret? Are you not as much at a loss, when you endeavour to reconcile the doctrine of the blessed Trinity with your reason, as you are in the case you object against us? Can you, or any man living, give a more intelligible account of that mystery than we can do of transubstantiation? Will not the notion of Three in One be eternally as great a contradiction, as it is that the body of Christ should be in a thousand places at once? Leave therefore these sensual



“ hankerings after reason, and believe whatever God saith is true, how impossible soever it seems to us : “ it is not our business to dispute God’s assertions, “ but to submit to them.”

This that they say, is very plausibly said ; and it is likely with unwary persons may take very much, and hath often done so.

But if you will consider well, you will find there is no force at all in what is said ; because there is a vast difference and disparity between the things we charge them with, and the things that they offer for the defence of themselves.

Three things I shall offer, whereby that difference will manifestly appear.

(1.) First of all, the doctrine of the Trinity, how unconceivable soever it be, as likewise the doctrine of our Saviour’s incarnation, are plainly and evidently delivered in the scripture ; so plainly, that we must deny the authority of the book of God, if we deny them : nay, they are the very first principles of Christianity, and set down in the New Testament as such ; and none, from Christ’s time to this, ever rejected them but were declared heretics for so doing. Whereas the doctrine of transubstantiation hath no foundation in scripture, nay, is directly contrary to the words of our Saviour, as I hope I have sufficiently proved ; and not only so, but it may be fully proved it was doctrine never known to the fathers for the first eight hundred years after Christ ; but it is a perfect novelty, first established by the council of Lateran ; and, by a very good token, it was the same council that first decreed the lawfulness of deposing of princes, and absolving subjects from their allegiance, in the case

of heresy : so that it is plain impudence in any, to name the doctrine of transubstantiation with those other Christian doctrines, as to the authority of them from the book of God.

(2.) But, secondly, there is this further difference between the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the doctrine of the Trinity, and the incarnation of our Lord, and such other mysteries of the gospel, that the first is plainly a matter that falls under our senses, but the other do not so: this ought extremely much to be regarded in this present controversy. It is no wonder we cannot fathom the depth of the Trinity, because God is an infinite Being, and our understandings are all finite. We may as reasonably think that we can contain the ocean in a small shell, as think we can fully and adequately comprehend the nature of God in our shallow understandings. The object is wonderfully too great for us; and therefore, if we will be too curious and inquisitive, it is but just, and unavoidably necessary, that we be entangled in our own nets. God only knows his own nature, and we know no more of it than he reveals to us, and therefore we have no more to do but to believe what we are certain he hath revealed; and though we cannot comprehend what he hath revealed concerning himself, nor reconcile it with our shallow reason, yet we know our reason was never given us for that purpose; we know there is an infinite disproportion between the object and the faculty that is to be employed about it. And though we cannot satisfy ourselves in our speculations concerning God, yet we have strong reason to believe that our being not satisfied doth rather proceed from the greatness of the object, and the weakness of our

understanding, than from any inconsistency or unintelligibleness of the thing itself.

But then, when we come to talk of transubstantiation, it is quite another matter. This is a just object of sense, nay, an object of all the five senses. If we can judge of any thing in the world, sure we may judge of the reality of a piece of bread, or of a cup of wine. All things that fall under our senses we are certainly competent judges of, or else we must suspend all manner of determination concerning things to the end of the world.

Never therefore let the Romanists say that our not being able to give an account of the Trinity is as much an argument against the truth of that mystery, as our not being able to give an account of transubstantiation is an argument against that : for you see there is an infinite disparity in the instances. If the nature of God fell under our senses, and was to be judged of by them, as all bodies are, they would argue right, and we would not contest against them ; but it is quite otherwise, God is infinite, and we are finite, and therefore he exceeds our measure. But the things that are exposed to our senses, they are like ourselves, and our senses were given us for the making judgments about them ; and it would be an affront to the God that gave us them, to think that when we used them as well as we could, we should be perpetually mistaken as to some certain objects.

(3.) But, thirdly and lastly ; the papists set the Trinity against transubstantiation, and they say, we may as well refuse the one doctrine as the other, because they are equally against reason, equally contradictory. But we utterly deny it, and that upon

this account: we can shew a great many impossibilities and contradictions in their doctrine of transubstantiation, evident to every one that hath common sense and reason; and such impossibilities and contradictions as they can noways get clear from, with all the subtilties and niceties and distinctions that they can make use of. But they cannot shew us any such contradictions or impossibilities in the doctrine of the Trinity, how mysterious and incomprehensible soever it be counted; no, nor in any other mystery of Christianity. There is no doctrine revealed by Christ but we can from scripture give such an account of it as that no man can charge any absurdity upon it. Though we cannot prove it by reason, yet when God hath once revealed it, we can prove that it is not contrary to reason.

And there is this thing further to be said about the Trinity, that how intricate and contradictory soever the papists account it, yet it was owned and believed for some ages by the wisest and most learned of the heathens themselves; and even by several of those who were the bitterest enemies of Christianity. Now these, sure, did not think it against reason, but highly agreeable to it. But the Romanists cannot say this, nor any thing like it, for their doctrine of transubstantiation; for I dare challenge any of them to shew when or where either Pagan or Turk or Jew, or any one but a papist, did or could believe so absurd a doctrine as that of transubstantiation is.

But I have said enough upon this point. Consider what you have heard, &c.

# A S E R M O N

ON

1 CORINTH. XI. 23-25.

*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*

**T**HAT patience of yours which hath been exercised with several discourses upon this text, I beg once more to try, and then I shall dismiss the argument.

That which led me to pitch upon this text was, the fair occasion it gave me to inquire into the doctrine and practices of the present Roman church, touching the sacrament of the Lord's supper : for here we have a standing rule laid down, by which the practice and doctrines of all churches in this matter are to be tried ; and that is, the agreeableness or conformity of them to what the apostles first received of the Lord, and afterwards delivered unto the church. By this test we meant to examine the present Roman catholic tenets about the sacrament ; and those we have already examined, I doubt not, appear to you so far from being apostolical or catholic or Christian, that they are quite contrary ; that is to say, are such as were not only not known to the apostles and the primitive churches of Christ



for several ages, but perfectly contradictory to what was then taught and practised; and besides that, are against all sense and reason.

Because we are a going off from this argument, I think it not amiss to repeat to you the several points or articles wherein we accused that church, for having departed from the rule of the text in the matter of the sacrament, for they are really worth your remembering.

Ten errors or abuses of this kind we charge them with; the first five of which I only named; the other five I proposed fully to discourse of: the first five were these:

1. First, their making of seven sacraments necessary to salvation, although not all necessary to every one; whereas it can never be proved that our Saviour ordained any more than two.

2. Secondly, their having the whole service or office of the sacraments in the Latin tongue, which is a language which the people do not understand, and by which, consequently, they cannot be edified; which kind of practice is, for that reason, condemned by St. Paul in the fourteenth chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians.

3. Thirdly, the priest's muttering the words of consecration to himself, so as that none of the congregation shall hear what he says, which is without any precedent in ancient times.

4. Fourthly, their making the priest's good intentions necessary to the efficacy of the sacrament; though he pronounce the words of consecration, yet if he intend not to make the body and blood of Christ in his mind, there is no body and blood made, and consequently all they who come to receive,

though they come never so worthily and devoutly disposed, yet they receive no sacrament.

5. Fifthly, the multitude of sacraments or masses which they allow to be performed in the same church on the same day, nay, even at the same time; and this at the instance of any one who will be at the charge of buying them. The price indeed is not much more than twelpence a mass; but yet it is a vile dishonour to, and prostitution of the blessed sacrament of our Lord's body and blood.

Though these errors and corruptions be great enough, yet the other five, which I was to insist upon more largely, do far exceed them; so grievous they are, that if the church of Rome be found guilty of any one of them, no man, that reads the scripture, can believe that the sacrament, as they hold it, can be the same with that which our Saviour instituted.

First, the first is, that whereas in every mass that is said in their church (and there are every day said many thousands) they have a sacrament, yet there is none communicates but the priest; so that here is every day, in the church of Rome, a communion without a communion.

Secondly, that at those solemn times, when they will allow the people to communicate with the priest in the holy sacrament, yet they rob them of half of it; for they will not allow any but the priest, who then administers, to receive the cup; so that here, though there be a communion, yet it is but half of that communion which our Saviour instituted.

Thirdly, they have transformed the sacrament into a sacrifice; whereas the only mystery of it consists

in this, that therein Christ gives his body and blood, in a spiritual manner, to be fed upon by us; they have made a new business of it: for in every sacrament they pretend to offer up to God our Saviour's very body and blood, as a true, proper sacrifice, propitiatory both for the quick and the dead.

Fourthly, whereas in this sacrament, according to our Saviour's institution, there is a material part and a spiritual; the sign, and the thing signified; the bread and wine to be received for our bodily sustenance, and the body and blood of Christ for the food of our souls; they have quite taken away the former from us by their doctrine of transubstantiation, which teacheth that after the priest hath said the words of consecration, there is no bread and wine left upon the table, and consequently none can be received, but all is turned into the very body and blood of Christ.

Fifthly and lastly, this bread, as we are apt to call it, which we receive and eat, they require us to worship and adore as God Almighty.

These are the points and articles in which we accuse the church of Rome to have grievously corrupted and depraved the Christian doctrine and practice in this matter of the sacrament.

As to the four first of them, I have already fully made good this charge against them; the last article only remains to be spoken to, which I shall now discuss as briefly and plainly as I can.

The thing, then, to be inquired into at this time is, whether the Romanists do not grievously amiss, and are guilty of a great corruption in this matter of the sacrament, when they give to it the very same worship that they give to God, and oblige all those

who shall be of their communion to do the same: that this is their practice, no papist can deny; that it is the doctrine and command of their church, the council of Trent, to which all their priests are sworn, will in express words assure us. After that council hath declared, that by the words of consecration the whole substance of the bread is turned into the substance of the body of Christ, and the whole substance of the wine into the substance of the blood of Christ, there immediately follow these words: "It is not therefore to be doubted, but that all faithful Christians should give to this sacrament that highest worship called *latría*, which is due to the true God." And whoever affirms otherwise, is, by a canon of that council, pronounced accursed: and this worship they give to the host, (viz. that round wafer which we call the consecrated bread,) not only at the time of receiving it, but whenever it is carried about in the streets. All passengers are then, by the sound of a bell, admonished to pay their worship and devotions to the god that passeth by them; and if any one shall say that this practice of theirs is not allowable, and that they are idolatrous for so doing, he is, in the same canon, pronounced accursed.

That this kind of worship was ever commanded by our Saviour, or given by the apostles, or allowed, or so much as thought on in their times; as there is nothing in the holy scriptures from whence we may gather it, so there is enough in the nature and contrivance of Christianity from whence we may plainly gather the contrary.

Can it be imagined that that religion, which doth so strictly forbid all idolatry, should set up a god to be worshipped, which, to all those that will believe

their senses, can appear no other than an idol, because it appears a mere piece of bread : that the catholic church of Christ, in the first ages, had no such kind of worship, besides a profound silence of antiquity concerning it, we have this undeniable argument, that the pagans would have hit them in the teeth with it whenever the Christians reprovèd them for their many idols ; but yet we do not find that ever they did. All the writings of the Christian fathers are full of invectives against the heathen idolatry ; they take a great deal of pains to expose the folly and ridiculousness of giving divine worship to that which is but a creature, or that which is the work of man's hands. Now with what face could they do this, if at the same time they were guilty of the same practices ? and though we should suppose that they could satisfy themselves with this, that what the pagans worshipped were real idols and false gods, but that which they worshipped was Jesus Christ the Son of God, under the form of bread ; I say, though they might satisfy themselves with this, yet how would this satisfy the pagans ? by them a piece of bread would still be thought a piece of bread, however the Christians fancied it was God Almighty. If a pagan had been present at one of the Christian assemblies, and at the elevation of the host had seen them all fall down and worship, would not he think that he had every jot as great reason to reproach them for adoring a piece of bread, as they had to reproach him for adoring the sun or moon, or this or the other image ? Minutius Fælix, a very early Christian writer, thus harangues it against the pagans. " They," says he, " melt brass ; they cast it, " they set it up, and fasten it : it is yet no god. They



“ polish it, they adorn it ; neither is it yet a god :  
“ but, see now, they consecrate it, they pray to it ;  
“ then as soon as men will have it to be a god, it is  
“ a god.”

Whether now might not the pagans return the same raillery upon the Christians, supposing the practice we are now speaking against had been then in use ? I give it you in the words of one of our divines, who hath most excellently handled this subject : “ Christians sow wheat, they cut, gather, and  
“ thresh it : it is no Christ yet. They grind it, they  
“ sift it, they bake it : it is still but a wafer. They  
“ set it upon an altar, they lift it up, they cross it  
“ several times : it is yet the same it was before.  
“ At last they speak the five words of consecration ;  
“ presently ten miracles break forth ; and among an  
“ hundred wafers, which are all like to one another,  
“ that which the priest pleaseth to think upon, that  
“ is their saviour.” If the practice of the pagans in this matter was absurd and ridiculous, then every jot as much was the practice of the Christians, and might have been as easily made appear so, and would without doubt have been made so, had there ever been any such practice among them.

But let the practice of the church be as it will, let us come to the reason of the thing. Were the old pagans idolaters or no ? If they were not, why do the scriptures, and all the Christian writers, charge them for such ? If they were, it will be easy to be proved that they who adore the host in the blessed sacrament, with the worship that is due to God only, are idolaters as much as they.

1. For first of all, is it idolatry to worship that for God which is not God ? If it be not idolatry,

then the pagans were not idolaters; if it be, then they who worship the host with divine worship are idolaters; for certainly that which they worship is not God, is not our Saviour, but a wafer; a piece of bread. It is true, they do not think so, but we are certain that it is nothing else; as certain as we can be of any thing that our senses, backed with the best reason, can report to us. If ignorance and mistake in this matter will excuse the Romanists, it will also excuse the pagans; if it did not excuse these, neither will it excuse those.

2. But, secondly, all the marks that the holy scriptures give of an idol, and all the reproaches that they cast upon it, do as well befit the popish god in the sacrament, and as heavily light upon it, as upon any thing that was worshipped by the pagans. It is a mark of a pagan idol, and the reproach of it, that it was made by men; (as both the Old and New Testament are very large and rhetorical in setting forth this.) Why is not the god in the mass as much the work of men's hands as any of the pagan idols were? Nay, bating the labour of the baker, there was none of them ever made so quickly, and so easily as this. For the speaking but five words, with intention, doth it.

Let none be offended that I say the papists *make* their god, or *make* the body and blood of Christ; for it is their own word, and solemnly used by them. And one of the greatest reasons for which they deny our orders and priesthood in the protestant church is, because we in our ordinations do not pretend to confer a power of making the body of Christ.

Furthermore, the penmen of the holy scripture

think they do not only sufficiently describe and mark out an idol, but sufficiently also expose it to laughter and contempt, by reckoning up the many outrages and ill usages it is obnoxious to, and from which it cannot rescue itself. Now there is no abuse of this kind which they reckon up, but the god, which the papists adore in the mass, is every whit as liable to it as any pagan idol in the world. If Laban be laughed at for serving *gods which were stolen away*, Gen. xxxi. 30. are not they we speak of as much to be laughed at, whose god hath been so often in danger of thieves, that they have been forced to make a law for the secure custody of him? If the Egyptians are reproached by Isaiah for worshipping that, which at the long run *is cast to the moles and to the bats*, ch. ii. 20. are not the Romanists as much to be reproached for worshipping that which is never safe from the teeth of the rats and the mice, if they can possibly get at it? If it be thought a sufficient argument to prove the gods of the Babylonians to be idols, because they were forced to be *carried upon men's shoulders, otherwise they could not help themselves*, and in the time of calamity they were liable to be *carried away captive*; which argument the prophet Isaiah (ch. iv. 6.) makes use of; will it not be as good an argument to prove the host in the mass to be an idol, because it is exposed to the very same inconveniences? They do frequently carry it about from place to place to be worshipped, and there is one day in the year set apart to that purpose, viz. Corpus Christi day. And, if we may believe history, this host hath likewise been taken from the Christians, and carried away captive by the Mahometans.

In a word, there are many other characters by which the holy scriptures do describe and reproach the pagan idols, which if you will take the pains to search out, and apply to the popish god in the mass, you will find that they fit the one every whit as exactly as the other.

3. But there is a further thing to be said against the popish host, that will prove it in a more true sense to be an idol or a false god, than any pagan idol can be proved to be so. The pagans (as the scripture chargeth them) made gods of *silver and gold, and wood and stone*; yet they were never so sottish as to think that after they had formed those materials into such or such figures or images, and by consecration had made them gods; I say, they were never so sottish to think that by this consecration the silver, or the gold, or the wood, or the stone, lost their substances, and were turned into the true nature and substance of that god they meant to worship. No; they always believed that what they thus consecrated still retained its former nature and substance, and was no more an object of their worship, than either as it was a representation of the god that they worshipped, or as by their consecration it became a receptacle, a house, a habitation in which the god would peculiarly vouchsafe his presence. And if this idol or material god of theirs happened to be stolen, or to be broken and defaced, or to be carried away captive; they were far from thinking that the object of their adoration, the god whom they worshipped, was either stolen or defaced, or carried away captive: such affronts might be done to his image, or to the house in which he dwelt, but he himself was infinitely above

all those injuries. This was the pagan notion. But those we are now dealing with go upon quite other principles; such principles indeed as by a pagan would have been thought to have reflected mightily upon the honour of God, and have done a great injury to him. They teach, that that bread of which the priest by consecration makes Christ Jesus, (and so an object of divine worship,) is turned into the very substance of that which they adore. By consecration it is not made a representation of our Saviour, or a lodge or habitation for him to reside in, but it is turned into his very self; so that it is no longer bread, but the very body of Christ, together with his soul and divinity united to it; (as the council of Trent expresseth it.) So that if this, which they make the object of their worship, (we call it a wafer, they call it the very body of Christ, together with the soul and deity,) I say, if this should happen to be stolen or burnt, or trodden under foot, or devoured by vermin; they must needs say, and they cannot deny, that it is their very Saviour, the person whom they worship, that suffers all these abuses and indignities. The heathenish gods had power enough to free themselves from those extremities; for it was but quitting their images or receptacles, and they were at liberty. But the God of the Christians is in a far worse condition, if the Romish doctrine be true; for according to them, after once the words of consecration are said, and thereby the substance of the bread turned into the body and blood of Christ, it will continue so to be, as long as any of the accidents of bread remain; that is to say, so long as any of us would think it to be bread.



4. But this is not all: let me add this, in the fourth and last place. Though all the reproaches that are cast upon the pagan idols in scripture do fall heavily upon the Christian idol in the mass, (if we may so call it,) yet there is one thing for which that worship may be reproached, and which casts such an indignation upon the person they pretend to adore, that never the like affront was put by any pagan upon his god. The Romanists have no sooner of the bread made a Saviour, and worshipped him, but they presently eat him. Most commonly, indeed, the priest only eats Jesus Christ; but at the most solemn times the people also eat him as well as he. Was there ever such a thing as this heard of in any pagan country? Did ever any man make a god, consecrate him, and then adore him with the same religious worship that he gives to the supreme God, and then within a minute swallow him down, and send him to those places which are not fit to be named? But yet this is done in the church of Rome every day.

Cicero, who was a pagan himself, and knew as much of the pagan religion as any man living did, tells us expressly in his book *De Natura Deorum*, lib. 3. that among all the religions of his time there was no man of any so foolish and sottish as to pretend to eat his God. The Egyptians, that worshipped the vilest of creatures, yet never dared to eat what they had once worshipped. But yet this affront the Romanists put upon the adorable Jesus, our God and Saviour, every time that his sacrament is celebrated. And I dare say they are the first that ever put this affront upon the Deity.

What shall we say to these things? I dare appeal

to the most rude barbarian in the world, whether, according to all the reason he hath, and all the natural principles he is acted by, whether it be not as high an injury as he can possibly offer to God, either to eat and devour that which he sincerely believes to be God, and hath just before worshipped ; or to worship and adore that for the supreme God Almighty, that he thinks he may the next moment lawfully eat. Either therefore let the papists cease worshipping and adoring the sacrament, or let them cease eating of it. If they will do both these, against sense and reason, against scripture, against the practice of the first and best Christians, we have nothing to say to them when they would persuade us to become catholics, but what a Mahometan said long ago. If there be no other catholic Christian religion but this, it is better for us to continue pagans, or heretics, or what you will. *Cum Christiani adorant quod comedunt*, (said that Arabian, Averroes,) *sit anima mea cum philosophis*, Dionys. Carthus. in 4. dist. 10. art. 1. If there be no catholics, no Christians “but those who will adore that which they eat, “it is better for us to be of the religion of the philosophers.”

But to all this charge of idolatry, in the matter of the adoration of the host, the Roman catholics think it a sufficient answer to say this: They do not worship any thing, nor pretend to worship any thing in the sacrament but Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world ; who, as being God-man, is a true and proper object of the highest worship. Do we think they would give adoration to the host, if they thought it was nothing but a piece of bread? No, they would abhor it as much as we. But being that they are

convinced that Jesus Christ is there under the form of bread, and that after the words of consecration said there is no bread left, but the substance of it is turned into the substance of the body of Christ, they think it not only lawful, but their duty, to give divine worship to Jesus Christ thus invisibly present.

This is the sum of what they say for themselves. And I think they say nothing but what is true. They would not perform adoration to the host, but that they verily believe it is the real body of Jesus Christ, and not a mere wafer, as we call it. And I think likewise, that if it was certain and evident that Christ's real body, together with his soul and divinity, as they phrase it, that is to say, the whole Christ, God and man, was present at the table, under the form of a wafer, they ought to worship him as such.

But then, having granted this, it makes nothing to their purpose ; this doth not excuse them from the guilt of idolatry, as we charge it upon them : for we have these two things to urge them with.

First of all ; by their own confession, all that can render the worship of the host lawful, or so much as excusable, is, the transubstantiation that is made of the bread into the body of Christ. But now, though the doctrine of transubstantiation should prove true, yet, for all this, they are not certain that every time they give adoration to the host they are free from idolatry.

But, secondly, if transubstantiation be not true, but the bread they worship be still bread, then they are as much idolaters as ever the pagans were.

1. First of all ; though the doctrine of transubstantiation should be true, yet they are not certain

that every time they worship the host they are free from idolatry.

My argument is this: the doctrine of transubstantiation may be true, and yet the bread and wine may not, in every sacrament, be turned into the body and blood of Christ. When they are not so turned, they who worship them worship a mere creature, and consequently are guilty of idolatry; but when they are and when they are not so turned, no man living can certainly know: for you are to understand, that, according to the Romish doctrine, the bread and wine are never transubstantiated but by a due consecration. Now to the making a due consecration there are required three things; that the words of the consecration be right spoken; that he who speaks them be a lawful priest; and, lastly, that the priest speak the words with intention and meaning to make the body of Christ of the bread. If any one of these three requisites be wanting, there is no consecration; and if no consecration, no transubstantiation; and if no transubstantiation, no body of Christ; and if no body of Christ, then what is worshipped is no more than a piece of bread; and consequently the worship that is given to it is idolatrous.

Now I will appeal to any man, whether he can at any time, much less at all times, when he is present at mass, and worships the host, whether, I say, he can be assured that the consecration is performed with all these three requisites? Can he be assured that the priest speaks the words right? It is impossible for him, because he cannot hear them pronounced; for by the laws of that church the priest is to speak the words in a low voice; so that the

standers-by cannot distinctly apprehend him. Can he be assured, in the second place, that the man who consecrates is a true priest? Before he be certain of this, he must know an hundred things which it is impossible for him to know; as, for instance, that he was lawfully baptized, that is to say, with the right form of baptism, and with an intention to be baptized; as also, that he had his orders from a true bishop, and that that bishop observed the essential form of ordination, and did intend likewise to make him a priest; and to make this bishop a true bishop, he must likewise have been baptized, and ordained with a due form, and with due intention, and by him that had due power: and, to know him that did it to have due power, the same question must be asked concerning those that ordained him; and so backward, even up to the apostles' times. But then, in the third place, for the intention of the priest that consecrates the sacrament, how can any man be assured of that? Suppose the priest to be an atheist, or an infidel, as there have been many; suppose the priest himself do not believe transubstantiation, as there have been several come over to us who have declared that even while they continued in that communion they did not believe it: if either of these cases happen, how is it possible that the priest can sincerely mean or intend to make the true, real body of Christ, when he speaks the words of consecration?

These now being the conditions that are required to the making a transubstantiation of the bread and wine; and these conditions no man living being able to ascertain himself whether the priest hath them or no, it remains, that it is impossible for any man,



at any time, to know whether at the sacrament he worshippeth Christ Jesus or a piece of bread; though yet, in the main, the doctrine of transubstantiation be true. Methinks, if there was no other consideration but this, it ought to abate the zeal of the Roman catholics for their adoration of the host, since, even according to their own principles, they cannot be certain that they do not commit idolatry every time they practise it.

2. But, secondly, all this is upon supposition of the truth of the doctrine of transubstantiation. But now, if transubstantiation should prove a mere fiction; if the bread and wine in the sacrament, notwithstanding the most authentic consecration, should still continue mere bread and wine, and the body of Christ still continue in heaven, at the right hand of God, and not come down hither at all, what will become of the Roman catholics then? If this should be true, are they not idolaters with a witness? do they not, in this case, give divine worship to a mere creature? and a contemptible creature too? Certainly they do; and, according to the notion that the scripture gives of idolatry, and that hath hitherto passed in the church, they are idolaters for so doing: nor is it we only that say so, but several of the papists themselves have acknowledged as much. I will give you an instance in Coster, one of the Jesuits, who affirms, that if their church be mistaken in the doctrine of transubstantiation, they do, *ipso facto*, stand guilty of such a piece of idolatry as never was before seen or known in the world. “For the errors  
“of those,” says he, “were more tolerable who wor-  
“shipped some golden or silver statue, or some  
“image of any other materials, for their god, as the

“ heathens worshipped their gods ; or a red cloth  
“ hung upon the top of a spear, as is reported of the  
“ Laplanders ; or some live animal, as of old the  
“ Egyptians did ; than of those who worship a bit of  
“ bread, as hitherto the Christians have done all over  
“ the world for so many years, if the doctrine of tran-  
“ substantiation be not true.” So that it seems, by the  
confession of papists themselves, if the doctrine of  
transubstantiation be not true, they are very great  
idolaters : but, this being granted, we will make bold  
to add a second proposition. We are as certain, as  
we can be of any thing, that the doctrine of transub-  
stantiation is not, cannot be true ; since it is against  
all evidence of sense and reason : and now let any one  
that will, from these two propositions, make the con-  
clusion.

But I must needs say there is a more plausible  
apology to be made for the Roman catholics in this  
matter ; and I will not be so unjust to them as to  
pass it by in silence ; it is this : “ They indeed  
“ do believe transubstantiation ; that is, that the  
“ body of Christ is indeed present in the sacrament,  
“ instead of the substance of the bread ; and upon  
“ that account they give divine worship to it. But  
“ suppose they were mistaken in their belief, which  
“ they hope they are not ; their good meaning and  
“ intention would excuse them from the crime of  
“ idolatry : they intend no worship but to Jesus, who  
“ is a due object of their adoration. If, through ig-  
“ norance, they give that worship to a creature,  
“ thinking it to be Christ Jesus, it is true, they are  
“ mistaken ; but they are no more idolaters upon  
“ account of that mistake, than a man would be  
“ thought a traitor to his prince, that, through igno-

“ rance, should take a courtier for the king, and  
“ kneel down and pay such respect to that courtier,  
“ as were only due to the king.”

It is true, this is very plausibly said : but I desire leave briefly to represent these two things, which will shew how insufficient this plea is for the clearing the Roman catholics in the matter we are now speaking of.

(1.) First of all, this that they say for the freeing themselves from idolatry in the mass-worship, goes upon a perfectly false foundation. It supposeth, that idolatry cannot be committed where a man is mistaken in the object that he adores. If a man, intending to worship the supreme God, should give divine worship to that which is not God, yet thinking it to be God, this worship of his is not idolatrous ; for though he be mistaken in the object, yet his meaning is right and good : this is the ground they proceed upon.

But it is not only false, but the direct contrary is true. There was never any serious idolatry in the world, but it was founded upon a mistake ; no serious man was ever so foolish as to adore that for the supreme God, which he did not believe to be the supreme God ; but yet if that which he worshipped was not God, he was, for all his good meaning, counted an idolater. I do not think that the Roman catholics do more steadfastly believe at this day that the consecrated bread is the true body of Christ Jesus, than thousands, I might say millions, of pagans did believe of old that the sun in the firmament was the supreme, all-wise, all-powerful, eternal God : but yet this ignorance and mistake of theirs did not so quit them from blame, but that by all the penmen

of holy scripture, they are charged with gross idolatry in worshipping the sun as such. If their error and misapprehension did not excuse them, it can be much less imagined how the belief of transubstantiation can excuse the Roman catholics : which will appear more plainly, after I have represented this in the second place.

(2.) We cannot deny but that ignorance and mistake, so far as it is innocent, and not contracted by our own fault, will excuse in all cases ; and therefore in this case of idolatry : but, as this is certain, that all idolatry doth proceed from mistake and misapprehension ; so it is also certain, that that idolatry will be the least excusable, and have the least allowances made for it, that hath the fewest temptations to it, and the most arguments of sense and reason against it.

And now I will appeal to all the world, whether the Roman catholics, that now worship a piece of bread, have not much fewer temptations to that worship, have not more arguments of sense and reason against it, and consequently can less pretend ignorance and mistake, and therefore are less excusable, than those among the pagans of old that worshipped the sun. The pagans, without doubt, had more to say for the proof of the sun's being God, than the Roman catholics have for the proof that a wafer is God : besides, they had no supernatural revelation of God's will, but were left wholly to the light of nature ; and if being prompted by the principles of their education, and the custom of all the world, to worship a visible God, what visible being in the world was more likely to be he than the sun ? but are there the same things to be said for the Roman catholics ? No,

certainly. They have the scripture to direct them to the true God ; they have all their senses to tell them that a piece of bread cannot be he ; they have their reason to assure them, by the way of mathematical demonstration, that transubstantiation is impossible ; they have twenty arguments from scripture to convince them, that the sense they put upon our Saviour's words, *This is my body*, is not that he meant, but the quite contrary. Lastly, they have had means and opportunities enough afforded them for the convincing them of their error, by the continued alarms and awakenings the protestants have given them, who, for these hundred and fifty years, have declared and testified against them.

Never therefore let them pretend invincible ignorance ; nor let them say, that their worshipping the bread for Christ Jesus, through a mistake, can be no worse interpreted by God, than a loyal subject's paying his homage to a privy counsellor, instead of the king, can be interpreted by the king : for there is nothing alike in the things. The countryman, who thus misplaceth his respect, is indeed excusable ; but if he had lived at court, as long as the Roman catholics pretend to have been acquainted with the scriptures, and to have made use of their reason, and yet should continue his first compliments, all the world would count him either a fool, or a madman, or a knave.

But thus much let it suffice to have spoken of this point and of this text.

Consider what you have heard, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.



# A S E R M O N

ON

JOHN VI. 53.

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

**M**Y design now is to explain this text, because, indeed, it is a text that needs some explication ; and because I am sensible there are several persons to whom it will be very acceptable to have a clear and satisfactory account given of it.

For indeed this is the only text in scripture, besides those words of our Saviour in the institution, *This is my body*, that is apt to stumble those of our communion in the point of the sacrament ; it seeming very much to favour the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Our Saviour here saith, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* And he adds further, *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*

This is the whole passage. What now (say the controversers of the Roman church) can be more evidently plain, than that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper the very true flesh of Christ is eaten, and his blood drunk, even in the most strict, literal sense ?

But what if it can be made to appear that the directly contrary is evidently plain, viz. that the words are so far from admitting such a sense as they now speak of, that they must of necessity be interpreted of a spiritual eating and drinking by faith, as we protestants contend for? I will not deny but that our Saviour in these passages might possibly make some allusion to the sacrament which he afterwards instituted; wherein, under the symbols of the bread and wine, he did then and doth still exhibit to all worthy receivers his body and blood in a spiritual sense; that is, the benefits of his body broken, and his blood shed, upon the cross. But this we say; that the eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood, here mentioned, is not primarily to be understood of receiving the sacrament, much less to be confined to it: for Christians do truly eat and drink of Christ's body and blood, as it is here spoken of, by believing in him, and being united to him by the vital communications of his Holy Spirit.

But then, further, if these words of our Saviour should be granted wholly to respect our eating and drinking in the sacrament, yet it is impossible they should be understood in that gross, literal sense that the papists would obtrude upon us, viz. that in the sacrament of the eucharist we do eat the very real, natural body of Christ, and drink his blood, and not bread and wine, as our senses would persuade us.

In speaking to this text I will observe this method:

First, I shall rescue it from the Romish glosses, and shew that it cannot possibly be interpreted any way in favour of transubstantiation.

Secondly, I shall give a clear and intelligible ac-

count of the true meaning of it ; and also shew, as far as I am able to judge, in what sense the church of England doth own the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the holy sacrament.

These points do deserve the serious consideration of all the honest members of our church.

I. First of all, against the papists, I am to shew that there is no foundation for their doctrine of transubstantiation from this speech of our Saviour's, but rather, considering what goes before and what follows after, there is enough in this very text wholly to overthrow that doctrine.

Now to make good this, I offer these following particulars.

1. First, it is something to our purpose, and ought at least to be taken notice of, that this text is, by some of the most learned papists themselves, so far from being urged as an argument for transubstantiation, that they acknowledge, nay contend, that it doth not respect the sacrament at all. Several men of very great name among them have gone this way. Cardinal Cajetan, upon the place, gives exactly the same gloss that the generality of the protestants do. "To eat," saith he, "the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood, is faith in the death of Jesus Christ: so that the sense is this: If ye use not the death of the Son of God as meat and drink, ye have not the life of the Spirit in you." And he afterwards expressly denies that these words are to be understood of eating and drinking in the sacrament. In this the cardinal follows St. Augustin, and others of the fathers : and he is herein followed by several of his own party ; but I shall not trouble you with their names.

2. Secondly, it will be hard to interpret these words of eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood in the popish sense upon this account : Christ here speaks of such an eating his flesh and drinking his blood as was actually at that time necessary to every man's salvation : *Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you.* This plainly proves that it was not only of obligation to all, but of absolute necessity to all that heard our Saviour, even then to eat his flesh and drink his blood. But the sacrament of the communion was not at that time instituted, (but at least a year after,) nor could the apostles, or any then present, have the least knowledge or intimation of such an institution. Either therefore the apostles at that time had no life in them, but were in a state of condemnation, or they eat the flesh of Christ and drank his blood, even then when there was no sacrament in use; and consequently could not eat and drink it in the gross, literal sense they would have.

3. But, thirdly, though we should suppose a prolepsis or anticipation in these words, that is, that though Christ expressed himself in the present time, yet he meant in the future, after that the sacrament should be instituted; yet, admitting this, it would be very hard so to restrain the eating of Christ's flesh and drinking his blood to eating and drinking in the sacrament, as to deny or exclude all other means of doing it. For if we are strictly to expound these words of eating and drinking in the sacrament, what will become of those who never had opportunity to partake of Christ's body and blood in such way? what will become of all baptized infants, that die before they come to years of discretion?

nay, what will become of all persons grown up, who are cut off by death before ever they come to the Lord's table, as God knows there are abundance in these days? Why, if these words be to be understood only of the sacrament, all such have no life in them, but are in a state of death and condemnation, notwithstanding their baptism. It is true, this gloss, as absurd as it is, made such impressions upon some churches in former ages, that they thought it as necessary to give the communion to sucking children as to baptize them. But the church of Rome itself is too wise, at this day, to retain any such practice among them. And yet, if their exposition of the text be true, I know not how this practice can be denied to be necessary.

4. But, fourthly, let us take our Saviour's words in a literal sense, which is the thing they would have us do: yet this will do no service to their cause, but rather disserve it. Their doctrine is, that in the sacrament, the elements of bread and wine, after the words of consecration, are turned into the very body and blood of Christ; this they express by the term of *transubstantiation*. But now our Saviour's words in this chapter, if taken literally, will rather prove that the body and blood of Christ are turned into bread and wine, than that bread and wine are turned into the body and blood of Christ. Our Saviour, in the forty-eighth verse of this chapter, says, *I am the bread of life*; and within three verses after he again repeats the expression, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven*; then in the text he tells them, that *they must eat his flesh and drink his blood*. How now are we to understand this? Why he himself explains himself



suitably to what he had said before in the verse following, and gives a reason of this strange command of his : *For, saith he, my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* Now, if there be any force at all in this passage, as indeed it is the most forcible of all the rest, then the words will much rather prove, that Christ's flesh is turned into meat ; that is, into that bread he was before speaking of, which is a known, common food for mankind, and answers to the manna in the wilderness, upon occasion of which all this discourse begun ; I say, the words will much more naturally prove this, than that the bread is turned into Christ's body. There is some colour, from the literal sound of the words, to make the former interpretation ; but no colour in the world for the latter, but rather directly the contrary.

5. But then, fifthly, let us take no advantage of this ; let us allow the papists to interpret the text of eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood, in that very literal sense they desire ; but then they will allow us to interpret Christ's former words, of his being bread, in the same literal sense also. If they do, as in reason they must do, then let us see what will come of it. According to this hypothesis, we must acknowledge, with them, that in the sacrament we eat Christ's very body, and drink his blood ; we eat and drink Christ himself : but then they must acknowledge with us, that Christ is true bread ; (for that the literal sense of his expressions doth as necessarily require as in the former case ; ) and therefore though we eat Christ's body in the sacrament, yet we eat true bread also. Now, how we can eat Christ's very body, and eat true bread

at the same time, let them that are concerned answer it ; but I am sure no answer can be given, but what will overthrow transubstantiation ; for that doctrine will not allow us to believe that we eat Christ's very body and bread at the same time ; but, on the contrary, it lays it down as an article of faith, that, after the bread is made Christ's body, it is no longer bread, but the appearance of it.

6. Sixthly, there is this other thing in the text fit to be taken notice of, which they will hardly be able to come off from. Let us interpret this saying of our Saviour, of the bread and wine in the sacrament, and grant, that the one is really turned into Christ's body, and the other into his blood ; let us, I say, admit this ; but what will then follow ? Why this ; in what a miserable condition, upon this supposition, are all lay-people among them, that are never allowed the necessary means of obtaining eternal life that are here required by our Saviour ? Our Saviour says expressly, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* The laity now among the papists, it must be confessed, do eat the flesh of Christ in the sacrament ; but I do ask, whether they do drink his blood ? If they do not, then they want one half of the qualification that is required of them in order to salvation. For Christ hath made the blood as necessary as the flesh ; he doth not say, *Except ye eat my flesh, or drink my blood, ye have no life in you ;* but, *Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood.* Both of them are certainly necessary, if the one be so ; and yet every body knows that the cup of the sacrament is wholly denied to the lay-people in the popish communion.

Their doctrine of concomitancy, which they have invented as to this matter, will not in the least help them to get off from this difficulty. The doctrine of concomitancy is this: they teach that the blood of Christ in the sacrament is so essentially united with the body, that whosoever communicates but in one element, whether it be bread or wine, doth, upon account of that union, really partake of both body and blood. But now, though this shift might serve some turn as to the evading the words of institution, (though there is no colour in the earth for it,) yet, as to this text, it cannot do them the same service. Christ here says expressly, If they do not both eat his flesh, and drink his blood, they have no life in them. They will allow no other interpretation of these words but this, that the flesh of Christ, here spoken of, is that which formerly was the bread in the sacrament; and the blood of Christ is that which formerly was the wine in the sacrament. Admitting now this sense to be true, I appeal to every one, whether it be not as necessary for every Christian to partake of the cup, that is, of the blood, as it is to partake of the bread, that is, the body; and, consequently, what will become of the people that are denied the cup?

7. But, seventhly and lastly, there is one thing further to be taken notice of in this text, that, if all hitherto said did signify nothing, would alone demonstratively overthrow the doctrine of transubstantiation, so far as it is grounded upon that text. As our Saviour saith, that *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*; so he goes further in the next verse, and saith thus; *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drink-*

*eth my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* The Romanists now say, that this flesh is that which is eaten in the sacrament of the eucharist by every communicant. The bread and wine, by the priest's words, are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ; and this body and blood every communicant doth receive and eat. What now must we say? Doth every one that partakes of the sacrament partake of eternal life, and will Christ raise him up at the last day? No; without doubt a great many receive unworthily, and shall be so far from receiving benefit by their communion, that it will increase their condemnation. Here now is the point: Christ says, *Whosoever eateth his flesh, and drinks his blood, hath eternal life, and he will raise him up at the last day.* The church of Rome not only confesseth, but contendeth earnestly, that every person who receives the sacrament eats Christ's flesh, and drinks his blood; (for the priest, of the elements, hath made both the body and the blood.) The natural conclusion from hence is, that every man that receives the sacrament shall have eternal life: but is this a true conclusion? or will they of the church of Rome stand to it? I believe they will not; for, if St. Paul may be believed, a man in the sacrament may *eat and drink damnation to himself*, as well as life to himself. It is most evident therefore, even to demonstration, that which is eaten and drunk in the sacrament is not always that body and blood of Christ which he speaks of in the text, and consequently very far is this text from proving transubstantiation; which was the thing to be made out.

II. And now, having done this, I come, in the

second place, to give such an account of the text, as will avoid all the absurdities that I have now mentioned, which the popish interpretation is obnoxious to; and will suit and cohere very well with all the passages in this discourse of our Saviour's.

And here I desire, in the first place, it may be taken notice of, that our Saviour himself hath given us a key for the interpreting this text, and all the passages that relate to it; so that we do not make an exposition to serve our own cause, but go exactly by such rules as our Lord himself hath prescribed for the interpreting his words. This is certain, that whatever gloss the Romanists make upon the text, Christ hath in express words forewarned us that we should not take these his sayings in a gross literal sense, but in a mystical and spiritual one.

The passage is remarkable. In the sixtieth verse of this chapter it is told us, that many of his disciples, when they heard this severe command of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, (taking the words in a carnal sense, as the papists now do,) *they were much offended, and said, This is a hard saying, who can hear it? Now* (as we have it in the next verse) *when Jesus knew this in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend where he was before?* In these words our Saviour seems to chide their dullness, and to endeavour to rectify their mistake about what he had spoken. This is his sense: You are offended at me for telling you that you must eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood. This you take in a gross literal sense; but sure you will be convinced that I have no such meaning,



when you see this Son of man, with his body and blood, visibly ascend into heaven, from whence he first came down. Then sure, you will have no such carnal imagination of eating my very body and drinking my blood; for then there will be no body to be eaten, nor no blood to be drank, for both will be in heaven, and not here upon earth. And lest this should not give them light enough for the understanding the allegory he had all along pursued, he yet spake more plainly to the business by adding this further thing; *It is, says he, the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.* The plain sense of which words is this: Though you could really eat my body or my flesh in that gross manner that you have taken me in, yet that would do you no good as to the spiritual life of your souls, that I have been all along speaking of. In every creature that hath life, it is not the flesh that is chewed by the teeth that is the fountain or principle of life in that creature, but the soul or the spirit that animates that body: and so it is as to the spiritual life of the soul. It is not my natural flesh, though you should eat it with your mouths, that would profit you at all in order to everlasting life; but it is the Spirit of God, my Spirit, that goes along and dwells with all true believers and disciples of mine, that must quicken you at the last day; must both produce the spiritual life in you in this world, and continue and perfect that life in eternal glory.

And then he thus concludes: *The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are life;* that is, The words that I have now spoken concerning eating of my flesh are to be understood in a

spiritual sense, or of a spiritual eating and drinking; and by that means, and that only, a true eternal life is to be obtained.

Well now, whether shall we believe the Romanists, who would interpret our Saviour's words carnally, or our Saviour himself, who saith, that he speaks them in a spiritual sense; and affirms, that the carnal sense, if it was practicable, would really do men no good? Well, but what is this spiritual sense of eating Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood, that is here intended? To this I answer plainly, according to all the light that the contexts afford in this matter; *to eat Christ's flesh, and to drink his blood*, (as our Saviour speaks of it in this chapter,) is no more than *to come to him*, or *to believe in him*: for by both these phrases this term of eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood is expounded in this very chapter. Christ saith, in the fortieth verse of this chapter, *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day*. In the forty-fourth verse he says, *No man can come unto me, except my Father draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day*. In the fifty-fourth verse he saith, *Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day*. So that the very same promise, in the same words, being made in the same discourse to all that *believe in Christ*, to all that *come to him*, to all that *eat his flesh, and drink his blood*; it is an undeniable argument, that both *coming to Christ*, and *believing on him*, and *eating and drinking his flesh and blood*, are but several expressions of the same thing. If there be

any difference in the phrases, it is this, that the *eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood* doth more particularly refer to his death than the other two phrases do.

This in the general: but, to speak more plainly, and to give a more particular account from the context.

Christ's whole business in this chapter doth briefly lie here: the men that now followed Jesus were those who had partaken of a late miracle of his, whereby he had fed some thousands with a few loaves and fish. Jesus takes occasion from this to tell them, *that they did not seek him for the miracle's sake, but for the loaves they had shared of*, ver. 26. And from thence he takes occasion, as it was his usual manner, to exhort, *not to labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life*, ver. 27. They ask him *how they might do that*, ver. 28; he answers them directly, the way was, *to believe in him*, ver. 29. They ask him *what sign he would give, or what miracle he would work, that they might believe in him*, ver. 30. and they urge him to do such a thing as Moses did, (ver. 31.) that is, to *give them bread from heaven*, ver. 32. Upon this occasion he begins and compares himself with that manna which Moses gave the Israelites; nay, shews how much he excels that, particularly in this, that that only continued a short, temporal life, but by believing on him they might get an eternal life, ver. 49, 50. They murmur at this, ver. 41. He tells them again confidently, *He that believeth in me hath everlasting life; I am that bread of life*, (ver. 47, 48.) viz. that spiritual food which will bring men to it. And lest

they should be mistaken what kind of bread he meant, he explains himself more fully; *The bread*, saith he, (ver. 51.) *is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*; that is to say, I will lay down my life for the salvation of mankind, and this death of mine shall be life to others; and this flesh of mine, thus crucified, shall be meat to all believers; such meat as shall nourish them up to everlasting life; and therefore whosoever eats this flesh of mine, thus offered, and drinks this blood of mine, thus shed, shall have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Which is the same thing as if he had said, Whoever doth heartily believe in me, and become my disciple, and frames his manners according to my commandments, and is so far from being scandalised at my death, that still he adheres to my faith, and continues my follower; to such an one this death of mine will procure eternal life, by the means of my holy Spirit which shall raise him up at the last day. But, on the other hand, unless a man do believe in me, and become my disciple, and even turn my death and passion to good nourishment (how scandalous and ignominious soever it be) by a lively faith, so as that he shall not upon that account forsake me, nor be offended at my doctrine, but still persevere in my faith and in my service; I say, except a man doth this, he hath no life in him, nor will I raise him up at the last day.

This, in short, so far as we can gather from the whole chapter, and by comparing one passage with another, is the true, genuine sense of our Saviour's words we are now insisting on.

Thus you see that the text is not to be interpreted in a gross, carnal sense, as if it was necessary to

salvation that every one should with his mouth eat the natural flesh of Christ or drink his blood. It is enough, if he do truly believe in Jesus Christ ; that he be his disciple ; that he so believe his death, as to be conformable to it, by his dying to sin and living to righteousness. This is truly feeding on Christ's body and his blood.

And though we do not deny that one principal instance of eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood be by the means of the sacrament, yet it is by no means to be confined to that only. Every true believer, that lives according to his belief, doth in every act of religion he performs eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood ; for he exerciseth acts of faith and obedience to him, and that is the true eating and drinking here mentioned.

And this is that which St. Augustin so often speaks of ; " How," says he, " shall I send up my hands to heaven, to take hold of Christ sitting there ? Send thy faith, and thou hast hold of him. Why preparest thou thy teeth and thy belly ? Believe, and thou hast eaten. For this is to eat the living bread. He that believeth in Christ, eateth Christ ; he is invisibly fed, because he is invisibly regenerated."

I might produce many more testimonies of the fathers, to prove the orthodoxy of this protestant exposition, if it were either needful or convenient.

But what then ? Do not we in the sacrament truly partake of the body and blood of Christ ? God forbid that any one should deny it. There is none that understands any thing of the sacrament but must acknowledge that therein, to all worthy receivers, the body and blood of Christ is both given



and likewise received by them. This is the sense of the Church of England, when she doth so often declare that she owns the real presence of Christ's body and blood to all that worthily receive the sacrament: which being a point about which so much dust hath been lately raised, it will not be amiss if I dwell a little upon this matter.

There are some that would bear us in hand that whatever exceptions we make against the doctrine of transubstantiation, yet in truth the doctrine of the Church of England, as to the sacrament, if it be not the same with that, yet is every way as mysterious, and may be charged with many difficulties and absurdities.

The Church of England, say they, doth expressly own and profess the real presence of Christ's body and blood to all worthy receivers: and this very thing may be loaded with as many difficulties as the other doctrine.

To this we answer: It can be loaded with no other difficulty at all, but is a plain and intelligible thing, as the Church of England explains it. We do indeed own that Christ is really present in the sacrament to all worthy receivers; and in our communion-office we pray God "to grant that we may eat the flesh of his dear Son, and drink his blood;" and in the prayer of consecration we "beseech him to grant, that we, receiving these his creatures of bread and wine, may be partakers of Christ's most blessed body and blood." All this we own, and it is very necessary we should; since the apostle hath in express terms said the very same thing, telling us that *the bread we break is the communion of Christ's body; and the cup of blessing which we*

*drink, is the communion of his blood*, 1 Cor. x. 10. Now since this was the language both of Christ and his apostles about the holy sacrament, and upon that account the church in all ages hath retained those terms and expressions, there was very good reason we in our public Liturgy should retain them likewise.

But now all the question lies here ; In what sense these terms or phrases or expressions are to be understood ? They of the other communion contend that the eating Christ's flesh, or the partaking of his body and blood, is to be understood in a strict, literal, proper sense. We say that the literal sense is impossible, because Christ could not give away his body to the apostles, while he was alive, with his own hands ; much less could he give it to them broken and crucified before he was crucified. And therefore these expressions are to be understood in a spiritual, mystical sense ; such a sense as the apostles must be supposed to understand them in, when they received Christ's body and blood from the hand of our Saviour himself. They say that the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood ; so that in the sacrament every communicant, good and bad, doth not eat bread, but the very flesh of Christ. Our Church saith, " that the natural body and blood of our Saviour are in heaven, and not here ; and therefore " our giving, eating, taking the body of Christ, is " only after an heavenly and spiritual manner ; and " the means whereby they are received and eaten is " faith." These are the very words of the rubrick of our Liturgy, and of our church Articles. You see here is a wide difference between us and them :

the plain meaning of our Church is this. In the holy communion, as in the other sacrament of baptism, “there is the sign and the thing signified; the  
“outward part, or sign of the Lord’s supper, is the  
“bread and wine; the inward part, or the thing  
“signified, is the body and blood of Christ. Now  
“as our bodies are made partakers of the bread and  
“wine, for their strengthening and refreshment; so  
“(if we receive them worthily) our souls are made  
“partakers of the body and blood of Christ, to  
“their strengthening and refreshment.” These are the words of our Church Catechism. But then this body and blood of Christ are to be understood in such a sense as a soul can be supposed to feed upon a body; or to receive strength and nourishment by feeding upon it: but now the body of Christ can be no otherwise a food for the strengthening and refreshing our souls, than only as the spiritual benefits of that body and blood, that is to say, the virtue and effects of Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross, are communicated to it; nor is the soul capable of receiving those benefits otherwise than by faith. So that the body and blood of Christ, in the sense of our Church, are only the benefits of Christ’s passion, that is to say, the pardon of sin, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, and a nearer union with Christ; and our eating and drinking of that body and blood is our being made partakers of those benefits; and the mouth whereby we thus eat and drink, that is, the means whereby we are made partakers of those benefits, is our true and lively faith.

This is plainly the sense of our Church in this matter. It is certain she cannot mean the body of Christ in any other sense than what we have now

declared, because she expressly affirms, that Christ hath but one body, and that body is now in heaven, and not here ; and she declares further, that that body which we eat is for the nourishment of our souls, (which body of Christ, in a proper, literal sense, though it were here present, could not contribute any thing to.) And, lastly, she declares, that the mouth whereby we partake of this body is faith : which is such a mouth as never was heard of for the eating a body truly and properly so called.

The sum of all this is, that when we talk of the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, or say, that to the worthy receivers the body and blood of Christ is communicated, we mean no more than this, that the holy Spirit of Christ is present at every such ordinance of God ; and that whosoever comes prepared with faith and repentance, and devotion and charity, that holy Spirit will not fail to apply to every such communicant the very body and blood of Christ broken and shed for us ; that is, all the virtue and all the benefits and effects of Christ's sacrifice.

So that if any one ask you, whether you own the body and blood of Christ to be truly present in the sacrament, your answer to this question must be by another question : ask them what they mean by the body and blood of Christ ? If by those words they mean the spiritual presence of Christ Jesus, for the conveying all the benefits and effects of his body that was crucified, and his blood that was shed for mankind, to all those souls that do piously and worthily commemorate his death by the sacrament, in this sense you do, with the Church of England, own a real presence of Christ's body and blood to all worthy communicants. But if by the body and blood

of Christ, they mean the substance of his body and blood which was taken of the Virgin Mary, and was crucified and shed at Jerusalem, and is now at the right hand of God, in this sense, according to the Church of England, you cannot own any real presence, but rather a real absence: for Christ hath but one body, and that body is in heaven, and not there; it being against the truth of his natural body to be in more places than one at the same time.

This now is a plain and clear and intelligible account of the matter. And this, I believe, and no other, is the sense of the Church of England about the real presence, so far as we can judge by her most public authentic declarations. And this hath been her sense about it ever since the reformation; nay, I may say, it was the doctrine of the Church of England several ages before the reformation; as may appear from the Saxon Homilies yet extant, which were read in our Church here, even before the Conquest.

I might be very large in heaping up the testimonies of our divines to this purpose. But I shall content myself with reciting to you only one passage of the most learned archbishop Cranmer. Whose words may go further than any other man's for the ascertaining and clearing the sense of our Church in this matter, since he had the principal hand both in compiling our Liturgy and our Articles. The passage I speak of is in the preface to his book against bishop Gardiner. And I shall conclude with it.

“Moreover,” says he, “when I say, and repeat  
“many times in my book, that the body of Christ is  
“present in them that worthily receive the sacra-  
“ment; lest any man should mistake my words, and



“ think that I mean, that although Christ be not  
“ corporally in the outward visible signs, yet he is  
“ corporally in the persons that duly receive them ;  
“ this is to advertise the reader, that I mean no such  
“ thing. But my meaning is, that the force, the  
“ grace, the virtue, and benefits of Christ’s body that  
“ was crucified for us, and of his blood that was shed  
“ for us, be really and effectually present with all  
“ them that duly receive the sacrament. But all  
“ this I understand of the spiritual presence, of the  
“ which he saith, *I will be with you to the end of*  
“ *the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20 ; and *wheresoever two*  
“ *or three are gathered together in my name, there*  
“ *I am in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. *And*  
“ *he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,*  
“ *dwelleth in me, and I in him*, John vi. 56. Nor  
“ no more truly is Christ corporally or really present  
“ in the due administration of the Lord’s supper,  
“ than he is in the due administration of baptism,  
“ that is to say, in both spiritually, by grace. And  
“ wheresoever in the scripture it is said that Christ,  
“ God, or the Holy Ghost is in any man, the same is  
“ to be understood spiritually, by grace.”

These are the words of that excellent bishop and martyr, and there needs nothing to be added to them.

I pray God give us all grace both in the sacrament and in all our acts of religious worship, and in our whole conversation, so to eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood, that we may have eternal life abiding in us, and by his Spirit may be raised up at the last day.

## APPENDIX.

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### THE LETTER WHICH OCCASIONED THE FOLLOWING ANSWER.

*To the Reverend Dr. Sharpe.*

Reverend Sir,

March 1, 1686-7.

**I**F you can prove to me that Christ hath no infallible church upon earth, or if you can give me a catalogue of but one man in an age that professed the same faith the church of England now embraces, from our Saviour's time till now, I will promise you to be no Roman catholic. So begging your pardon for giving you this trouble, I take leave to subscribe myself,

Sir,

Your humble servant,

ALI. KINGESMILL.

P. S. What church holds all the Thirty-nine Articles of the church of England?

*His Answer.*

Madam,

In the business wherein you have concerned me with you, you seem to have forgot what is your part and what is mine. You tell me, you were bred up in the church of England, which church denies the infallibility of the Roman church; now, if any arguments have been offered you, which startle you in that point, and seem to you to prove

that Christ hath an infallible church on earth, and that the church of Rome is that church, your province is to acquaint me with those arguments that do thus unsettle you, and my part is to endeavour to give you satisfaction about them: but now you turn the tables, and require of me to prove to you that the church is not infallible. Those that directed you to proceed thus, know very well that this is not fair dealing; and since it is their side that maintain the affirmative, namely, that the church of Rome is infallible, they ought to prove it, and not put it upon us, who deny it, to prove a negative: so that all the answer that I need to return to this proposition of yours is, to make another to your friends; and that is, that if any of them can prove to me that the church of Rome is infallible, I will not only give my consent that you shall be a Roman catholic, but I will be one myself.

As for the next thing you put upon me, viz. to give you a catalogue of but one man in an age, that professed the same faith the church of England now embraces, from our Saviour's time till now. To that I give you this answer; that whenever your friends will name one man, within the compass of five hundred years after Christ, of whom it appears that he held, in all things, according to the faith of the church of Rome, as it is now established by the council of Trent, I will at the same time do what you desire of me.

To the question you ask in the postscript of your letter, viz. what church holds all the Thirty-nine Articles of our church besides the church of England? (so I suppose you meant to put it,) I return another question, as needful for you to be satisfied

in ; and that is this, What church in the world holds all the definitions of the council of Trent besides the church of Rome, if, indeed, all the parts even of that church do receive all of them ?

These, madam, were the answers I drew up to your captious questions, immediately upon the receipt of your letter ; and I once thought of sending them thus without any further additions, being sure that what I here offer to you is as reasonable as what you demand ; and it concerns you as much to be satisfied by your friends in those things that I propose to you, as it concerns you to be satisfied by me in those things you have proposed to me. But, upon second thoughts, that you might not think that I have a design to use you, as I perceive your friends do ; that is, only to amuse and blunder you, and not to instruct you ; I was resolved to employ my first leisure in looking over your paper again, and giving you, as plainly as I could, my sense of it ; and that is the reason you stay a day or two longer for my answer.

Your first demand is, to prove to you that Christ has no infallible church upon earth. Madam, though it be not usual, as I said, to put people to prove negatives, (the proof always lying on the affirmer's side, it being sufficient to satisfy one that a thing is not, that there is no proof or reason for the being of it,) yet I shall for once so far comply with you, as to offer you some of my reasons why I do not believe that Christ hath any church upon earth absolutely, and in all things infallible, or infallible in that sense in which the Romanists do usually attribute infallibility to their church.

And my first reason is, that if Christ had meant

that there should be always an infallible church upon earth, I cannot but believe that it would have been somewhere or other expressly told us in the New Testament, both that there was an infallibility lodged in the church for ever; and, likewise, in which of all the churches in the world this infallibility was lodged; that so upon all occasions Christians in all ages might know where to have recourse to that infallible church: but now, this not being done in the whole New Testament, neither by our Saviour nor by his apostles, it is an argument to me that no such thing was ever intended by them. Your friends here must not think to put us off with, *Thou art Peter, &c. And upon this rock, &c. And if he will not hear the church, &c.* and such other texts as these; which as they have been answered a thousand times, so in truth, to any unbiassed reader, will appear either not to speak at all to the business of infallibility, or not to concern any but the apostles themselves. Indeed, I am so very well assured of the weakness of your scripture-proofs for the Roman church's infallibility, that I believe there may as plain texts of scripture be produced for the infallibility of the king, or for the infallibility of every good man, or for the infallibility of any two or three Christians, assembling together in the name of Christ, as there can be produced for the infallibility of the pope, or of any particular church.

My second reason, why I do not believe that Christ hath any infallible church upon earth is, because I do not find that any of the primitive churches ever pretended to any such infallibility, no, not the church of Rome herself.

I do not find that, in the controversies which



arose in the ancient church about matters of faith, the guides of the church ever made use of this argument of the church's infallibility for the disquieting and ending of them; which yet, had they known of any such thing, had been the properest and the easiest means they could have used.

I know that the ancient fathers had another method of confuting heretics and schismatics, than by appealing to the church's infallibility; namely, by bringing their doctrines to be tried by the ancient usages and traditions of the apostolic churches; and especially by the divine oracles of the scriptures, which they looked upon as the entire and only rule of faith.

I know further, as to the church of Rome, that by what appears by the carriage and behaviour of other churches in the primitive times towards that church, in matters where they were concerned together, it must be thought impossible that those churches should ever have entertained any opinion, or so much as imagination, of the Romish church's infallibility; they making no scruple, whenever there was occasion, to oppose the sense of that church as vigorously as they either did or could oppose any other particular church that differed from them.

My third reason, why I do not believe the doctrine of the church's infallibility, as it is maintained by the church of Rome, is, because I do not see any effects of this infallibility in the world, or any good that hath accrued to the church, which may not as well be ascribed to God's ordinary assistance of every Christian church without infallibility, as with it.

It is said, that without an infallible judge controversies that arise among Christians cannot be

ended: why, that very church that pretends to infallibility are not yet agreed among themselves about several points of religion; nay, this very business of infallibility, as to the seat of it, where, or in whom it is lodged, is yet as great a controversy among them as any.

It is said, that without an infallible judge the scriptures cannot be expounded; the sense of texts cannot be ascertained. Why, I would gladly know what advantages the church of Rome, that pretends to infallibility, hath in this respect above other churches that pretend to none? Do they understand the scriptures better than we, or have they cleared or settled the sense of but one doubtful text, by the power of their infallibility, during all the time they have pretended to it? Let them produce one text, the sense of which is by this means ascertained: I believe they will not offer at it; they know, as well as we, that all those texts of scripture which were difficult and obscure at the first, remain so to this day, for any thing that their infallible judge has done towards the clearing of them. And if the sense of any obscure passages in those holy books be more cleared or better ascertained to us, than they were formerly, no thanks for this to an infallible judge, but to fallible commentators, whose learning and industry, through the blessing of God, have been of great use for the untying of difficulties of scripture: nay, I add this further, that of all expositors of holy scripture that I know of, the popes themselves, who are by some accounted the infallible judges, have been as unlucky as any; and so far have they been from clearing obscure texts, that they have miserably perverted and misapplied the

plainest, as abundance of instances might be given out of their Epistles, which now make a considerable part of the canon law.

My fourth reason against any church's infallibility, and which, I suppose, will be a good argument with you, is this; because I can, as I think, make it appear that the church of Rome (which is the only church in the world that I know of which pretends to this infallibility) hath herself actually erred in several points of faith; and, if so, it is impossible that she should always have been infallible. This, I hope, is a convincing reason against the church of Rome's infallibility; and, provided your friend will fairly answer my three foregoing negative proofs, by shewing that I have misrepresented things as to this matter; and that it may be proved from scripture, and from ancient church authority, and from effects visible in the world, that Christ always hath an infallible church upon earth, then I promise to join issue with him upon this last point, and to make out that the church of Rome cannot be that infallible church, because she hath actually erred.

The reasons of this my assertion are these: If the scriptures be infallible, then the church of Rome hath actually erred, because she hath in many instances, both of doctrine and practice, departed from the holy scriptures.

Again: If the church of the primitive ages was infallible, then the church of Rome hath actually erred, because the church of Rome now holds doctrines which the primitive church, nay, and the Roman church itself, disowned and rejected; and, on the other side, the church of Rome now rejects and disowns doctrines which the primitive church

and the church of Rome herself in those days, owned and believed : so that either the ancient church was not infallible, or the present church is not so ; however, the church of Rome hath little pretence to it.

Again : If it can be made to appear that one pope hath declared himself contradictorily to another pope in matters of faith ; or that one council confirmed by the pope hath contradicted another council confirmed by the pope, and that too in matters of faith, as one of the councils themselves accounted them ; then, I suppose, you will grant that the church of Rome hath actually, at some time or other, erred ; the highest authority in that church maintaining things contradictory to one another, unless you will say that contradictory propositions may both be true : but now this we are ready to make out when there is occasion.

I have dwelt the longer upon this business of infallibility, because I remember you told me that this was the main, if not the only point you desired to have some discourse about.

As for the other thing in your letter, about one in an age professing the faith of the church of England, how that came to be tacked to the other, you yourself best know ; however, I will give you my answer as briefly as I can to that part of your letter, from whence you yourself may be able to frame an answer also to the question in your postscript.

You say, that if I can give you a catalogue of but one man in an age that professed the same faith the church of England now embraceth, from our Saviour's time till now, you promise you will not be a Roman catholic.

Madam, the faith of the church of England is that common faith that was once delivered to the saints, and was put into writing by the apostles and other inspired men, and is summarily contained in the ancient creeds of the church. It is that faith into which all Christians in all ages of the church were baptized; and which in ancient times was thought sufficient to carry a man to heaven, if he lived according to it. And, lastly, it is that faith which is at this day owned by the church of Rome herself; (though the hay and stubble they have built upon, the new additions they have made to it in the council of Trent, without either authority of scripture or apostolical tradition, are deservedly rejected by us;) I say, this is the faith embraced by the church of England. And whereas you only desire a catalogue of one man in an age that professed this faith, we will be more liberal to you, and give you catalogues of great numbers in every age that lived and died in this faith; nay, we are sure that the apostles, the ancient martyrs and confessors, nay, and all holy Christians, in all ages, professed this faith, and never had any other.

This now, madam, being the plain state of the case, I hope you will think yourself obliged to continue in our communion, since you promise that, if I can but give you a catalogue of one man in an age that professed the same faith.

Why, madam, I declare to you, (and let your friend make out the contrary, if he can,) that every church, and every good Christian in every age, from Christ's time till now, hath professed the same faith the church of England now embraceth; for all churches and all good Christians have always pro-



fessed to believe the doctrines of the holy scriptures, and have always professed to believe all the articles of the ancient creeds; and that, I assure you, is the faith of the church of England. And I add this further, that it is for this very reason that we allow the church of Rome to be a part of the church of Christ, and the members of it capable of salvation; because in that church the common faith is still professed, even the faith of the church of England; though yet with so great a mixture of dangerous errors superstructed thereupon, that we, who are convinced of those errors, dare not for the world embrace the communion of that church, so long as the joining in the profession and practice of those errors are made necessary terms of that communion.

But I expect that you should say, that by the faith embraced by the church of England (as you express it in your letter) you meant the Thirty-nine Articles, by which the church of England is distinguished from the church of Rome; and you would have me give you a list either of churches or men that have always believed according to that faith of the church of England.

But, madam, though this demand or request might justly enough be made by us to those of the popish communion, with reference to the articles of the council of Trent, as they are summed up in pope Pius's new Creed, where the belief of the Trent articles are made as necessary to salvation as the belief of the articles of the old Creed; yet it is by no means a fair demand of the papists to us protestants, with reference to our Thirty-nine Articles: and my reason is this; because we do not look upon all our Thirty-nine Articles to be articles of faith in

the sense that you look upon the definitions of the council of Trent to be articles of faith.

We believe some of our Articles to be necessary points of faith; and these are common to us with other churches. We believe all of our Articles to be useful truths, but several of them are negative ones, being levelled against the corruptions and innovations of the church of Rome, and other prevailing errors of the times they were made in. These now are not strictly and properly parts of our faith, but rather needful guards and securities of our church against the dangerous mistakes in matters of religion that were then and are now too prevalent in the world.

This very thing that I have now represented may satisfy you fully of the unreasonableness of your demand in the sense that I believe you meant it in. You would have us shew you a succession of men that have always made the Thirty-nine Articles of the church of England the standard of their faith; or that have in all points held as the church of England doth in her Thirty-nine Articles. Why, madam, would you have had doctrines condemned and cautioned against, before there were any people in the world held those doctrines? Would you have had primitive fathers and councils to have made express articles and declarations against the pope's supremacy, for instance, against the infallibility of general councils, against transubstantiation, against the half communion, and the like, when there were no such opinions or practices heard of in the world? It was the corruptions and innovations in the doctrines of Christianity, introduced of latter times, and chiefly by the church of Rome, that gave occasion

to those articles and declarations of our church ; but sure you cannot expect that any church or that any man should have declared against such errors in the church before they were in being.

Let us suppose, for instance, the second council of Nice, which established image worship, should at the same time have condemned Mahometanism, which not long before had begun to appear in the world ; let us suppose likewise a Turk should now challenge you to give a catalogue of but one church, or, if that be too much, of but one man in an age, that, from Christ's time till the second council of Nice, always professed the same faith as to Mahomet's being a false prophet that that council embraced ; nay, and should promise you, that if you could give him such a catalogue he would not be a Mahometan ; I ask you what you would say to this Turkish argument ? Is it a good argument, or is it not ? Doth it overthrow the established doctrine of the council of Nice, or no ? I believe you will say that the Turk makes a very unreasonable demand, (considering that Mahomet appeared not till long after Christ's time,) and that his argument is nothing to the purpose. And yet I assure you, madam, this is just the very same argument that your friend hath put in your mouth for the overthrowing of the established doctrines of the church of England in her Thirty-nine Articles.

This may be sufficient to let you see how unreasonable your demand is ; but I will say this further, by way of direct answer to it, viz. that by what we can gather from the scriptures, and from the sense of the primitive church, declared by the fathers and councils, we think we have reason to believe

that the ancient churches of Christ would have joined in communion with the church of England upon such principles and doctrines as are now established in the Thirty-nine Articles ; and that in those points that are now controverted between us and the church of Rome, if they had then been started, they would have been on our side, and not have sided with the Romanists. And this we are so confident of, that we will at any time refer the points in difference between us to be tried by the holy scriptures, and by the sense of the primitive church, so far as we have any notices of it by fathers or councils.

And now, madam, you have my sense of your paper, I have this to beg of you ; that if any of your friends think fit to reply, he would not catch at any single passage or expression in this my answer, and from thence take occasion to ask me I know not how many sophistical questions, which only tend to confound you, and to create me trouble ; but that he would deal like a man of learning and piety and ingenuity, and answer my arguments, or reply to my answers, one by one, plainly and honestly, so as may contribute most to your discovery of truth. This way, I am sure, if you be sincere, is most for your benefit. Thus, madam, praying God to direct you, I rest, &c.

# AN ANSWER

TO

## SOME QUESTIONS PROPOSED BY A ROMAN CATHOLIC.

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### QUESTION I.

*MAY a man, wilfully dying a Roman catholic,  
be saved?*

### ANSWER.

What the proposer means by wilfully dying a Roman catholic, I know not. In our language, this now [wilfully] hath commonly an ill sense; and we seldom use it but with respect to a man that obstinately follows his own will against the best reason and advice. Now if this be his sense of wilfully dying a Roman catholic, he must expect a harder answer to his question than I am now willing to give: in the mean time, till he hath explained himself, this is my general answer; viz.

A man dying a Roman catholic may or may not be saved, according as his circumstances in this world render his errors more or less excusable.

We hold the errors of popery to be in themselves dangerous; and therefore we tell every one, that it concerns them, as they love their souls, to have a care of them: but yet we do not say that all papists are damned; as neither do the more moderate Roman catholics say that all protestants are.

But what is the design of putting this question?



and at the head of all the rest? The proposer knows well enough, that, whether we can answer it or no, or whatever the answer be that is given to it, it makes nothing at all to the cause depending between us and them. But I suppose he fancied he should make some advantage of the concessions he presumed we should make, for the easier gaining the person for whose sake these questions were proposed.

Taking it for granted that we would readily allow that a papist may be saved in his religion; and withal telling the person, that the catholics do not allow so much to a protestant dying in the protestant religion; he thought, by this artifice, to persuade him or her, that therefore their church or religion must undoubtedly be safer than ours.

But if this was his design, he shews that he had a very mean opinion of the understanding of the person he dealt with; for can any one of ordinary sense be persuaded that popery is ever the better for our charitable opinion of some papists? or that protestancy is ever the worse for their uncharitably damning all those that are not of the popish communion?

If the cause that is in dispute was at all affected by what is thus pronounced by either party upon each other, for my part I should think that the advantage would be much on the side of the protestants: for, sure, any reasonable man (if he had his church to choose, and supposing that all other points in difference were laid aside) should rather join with that society of Christians which allowed that Christians of other communions might be saved as well as they, than with that society that confined salvation only to their own party, and damned all the rest of the Christian world.

Sure I am, when all things are considered, it will appear that charity is infinitely more a certain note of a true church, though without the pretence of infallibility, than a pretence to infallibility without catholic charity : and yet those that make notes of the true church in the Roman communion never fail to put in one, but usually leave out the other.

QUESTION II.

*Was not the society of Christians, united in faith and communion with the bishop of Rome, once the true catholic church ?*

ANSWER.

If by the society of Christians, united in faith and worship with the bishop of Rome, he meant only those Christians that were under his jurisdiction, and that owned him for their bishop, or for their head ; then we say, that society of Christians, thus united with the bishop of Rome, was never the true catholic church, but only one part of it.

If by the society of Christians here spoken of be meant all those churches all the world over, that, as they had the same faith, so were once united in one communion with the bishop of Rome ; (as, for any thing I know, before the great divisions of Christendom, there might be such a time ;) I say, if this be the meaning of the question, then I answer, that all these churches taken together, thus united in faith and worship, were the true catholic church. But then, we say, that none of these churches was more the catholic church than the rest ; but they were all equally parts of the catholic church, and they were no more united with the bishop of Rome than the bishop of Rome was with their bishops. My meaning is, while things thus happily stood, they were all

united together under their several bishops, in the common bonds of faith and charity and communion, as all Christian churches ought to be, and as it is much to be desired they were. But the bishop of Rome had no more authority over them, than they had over him; they were all sister-churches, but owned no head, no universal bishop over them, but Christ Jesus; and in case of a rupture (as God knows a great one did happen, and still continues, and which, not without cause, we lay chiefly at the doors of the church of Rome, upon account of their groundless usurpations in matters of government, and innovations in matters of faith,) I say, in case of a rupture, the church of Rome was as much obliged to reunite itself with those other churches, supposing the rupture or schism was occasioned by her, as any of those other churches were obliged to reunite themselves with the church of Rome, supposing the schism or the breach began through their fault.

### QUESTION III.

*In what century did she commit the first error, and what visible communion did then oppose her?*

### ANSWER.

1. If it doth appear *de facto*, that the church of Rome hath erred, and doth yet continue so to do, it is not at all material whether we can assign the precise time or no when she did commit the first error, (as the gentleman phraseth it,) or who first opposed her in her errors.

Errors are not the less errors for having an undiscernible beginning, and not being suddenly taken notice of; no more than the tares in the field of corn, that our Saviour speaks of, were the less tares for

being sown in the night, by nobody knows who, while the husbandmen slept.

But, I pray, let these gentlemen, who call upon us to shew the century when the errors of their church began, and who at that time opposed them, or else they must conclude that the church of Rome hath not erred at all, I say, let them try this argument of theirs upon a man that is troubled with the yellow jaundice, and persuade such a man, if they can, or any one that sees him, that, if he cannot assign the precise day of the week when his distemper first began, and shew that somebody at that time gave him notice of it, and bid him have a care of himself; I say, that if he cannot shew this, he may certainly conclude he hath not the yellow jaundice, but is a perfect sound man; notwithstanding that his great weakness and decay of spirits, and the yellowness of his eyes and face, do sufficiently discover to himself, and all that see him, what a condition he is in.

2. But, secondly, though it be not needful, for the shewing that the church of Rome hath erred, to give an account of the beginnings, and other circumstances of her errors, yet we are not so much in the dark about these matters, but that we are able to give competent satisfaction to any indifferent inquirer, both as to the rise and as to the progress of most of the popish errors; by what degrees they crept into the church; and who were the great promoters of them, and who were against them. And this hath been several times done by protestant writers in their discourses, as there hath been occasion.

## QUESTION IV.

*Was there always a true church upon earth?*

## ANSWER.

We do believe there always was, and always will be, a true church upon earth; but we do believe that it never was confined to the church of Rome: and we believe likewise, that, though the church of Rome was not in being, nor never had been, there would be still, and would always have been, a true church of Christ upon earth.

## QUESTION V.

*By what legal authority was the church of Rome condemned to be heretical?*

## ANSWER.

I suppose this question is tacked to the former, to make a sort of argument that the church of Rome is the only true church; for the proposer thought, that if we did allow that there always was a true church upon earth, we must of necessity grant, that the church of Rome must be that church, unless we can prove that she hath been condemned to be heretical by some legal authority; that is, (I suppose he means,) by some general council: but this sophistry is too apparent not to be easily seen through.

For, first, had the church of Rome continued never so orthodox, from the foundation of it to this day, yet we should never have owned that she was the true church, in their sense; that is, the one holy catholic church which we profess to believe in the Creed. For still, we should only have owned her as a part of the catholic church, and we should have believed other churches to have been as truly parts of it as she, only with this difference, that if it ap-



peared that she had preserved the faith and worship of Christ more pure among her members than other churches had done among theirs, we should have owned her as a sounder church, and her communion to be safer than that of the rest. But then, we must give the same preference to any other church against her, when it doth appear (as we think it doth) that they do better conform to Christ's rule in faith and worship than she doth.

But, secondly, why may we not be able to satisfy ourselves that the church of Rome is not the true church, unless we can shew by what legal authority she was condemned to be heretical? Can nothing forfeit a title to the being the true church but only heresy? Supposing the church of Rome was not guilty of heresy, but only of schism, (as, of all the churches in the world, we think we have reason to charge her with that crime in an especial manner,) is not that sufficient to satisfy us that she is not the only true church?

Thirdly, admitting the church of Rome must be the true church, unless she be heretical, (which yet we can never believe,) but admitting this, what reason is there that we should be put to prove that she has been condemned to be heretical by some legal authority? May not the church of Rome be guilty of heresy, though she was never condemned to be heretical? By the same reason that you will deny this, I will deny any man to be a felon, (though I be never so sure he broke up my house and stole my goods,) till I see him condemned to be hanged. That which makes a man or a church heretical is, the maintaining openly such doctrines as are contrary to the faith of Christ; but the sentence of authority

against such a man or such a church doth only declare them heretical, but doth not make them so. So that the church of Rome, if she maintain such doctrines, may be guilty of heresy, though she was never condemned to be heretical.

And, further, I should be glad to know by what legal authority the protestant church of England is condemned to be heretical: and yet the Roman catholics make no scruple to bestow the name of heretics very liberally upon us. But let them not name the council of Trent, lest they hear more about it than they desire.

But it may be the author's design in proposing this question was only this: he would have us shew by what legal authority the church of Rome was condemned to be heretical, otherwise he thought we could not justify our separation from that church.

Indeed, as things have stood since the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome have begun to prevail in these western parts, and as they do yet stand, it is impossible, had the church of Rome been never so heretical, to have her condemned as such by any general council truly so called; because the affairs of Christendom have of a long time been, and are now, in such a posture, that such a council cannot be convened as is truly free and general. All the eastern and the southern churches, which made four of the five patriarchates, are, by their deplorable circumstances, cut off from all possibility of giving their votes in such a general assembly. And as for the churches in these western parts of the world, if the pope be to call a council of them, (as we can expect at present no other than such,) we know what we have to trust to, by an experiment that

was made of this kind in the last (pretended to be general) council of Trent: which indeed was so far from being general, that it was not a full western council, the major part of them there assembled being wholly the pope's creatures, and carrying all his points to his mind, notwithstanding the remonstrances of several sovereign princes to the contrary. But though we cannot say that the Roman church hath been condemned by any general council as heretical for her innovations, yet we can say that she doth now hold some doctrines contrary to the definitions of former general councils acknowledged to be so; we can say, and prove, that she teacheth doctrines contrary to the sense of the primitive fathers, and of some of her own popes; and we do say and believe, that if popery, as it is now established by the council of Trent, had been brought into debate at any of the first four general councils, it would have been condemned as much as we now condemn it.

#### QUESTION VI.

*Had the first protestant reformers the infallible assistance of the Holy Ghost in the reforming the church?*

#### ANSWER.

There was no need of any personal infallibility to be bestowed upon the first reformers, for they pretended not to preach a new gospel to the world, or to found new churches, as the apostles did; all that they pretended to was, to preach the same gospel that Christ and his apostles delivered to the world, and which by an infallible Spirit was committed to writing for the benefit of after-ages, and to rescue that gospel from those corruptions and errors which time and ignorance had mingled with it: this, I say,

was their work. And if they were assured themselves, and gave sufficient evidence to those they preached to, from the holy scriptures and the writings of the primitive fathers, that they did this, they needed no private infallibility for the carrying on that design. A wise man will certainly give more credit to a person, in what he offers about religion, who proves the doctrine by scripture and antiquity, than to any men or church that pretends to infallibility, and yet are destitute of these two supporters as to what they propose to our belief.

## QUESTION VII.

*Had the church of England that assistance? If they had, to shew it: if not, how do they know they are rightly informed?*

## ANSWER.

I have in part told you ; but I will tell you further, what assistance the fathers of the church of England had in her reformation. They had the scriptures on their side. They had the primitive fathers and the councils on their side. They had the highest authority both ecclesiastical and civil on their side. And they had the blessing of God to go along with their endeavours. This assistance the church of England had in her reformation, and no other did she ever pretend to ; and by those very means, and no other, doth she pretend to know that she is rightly informed. She knows she cannot be an heretical church, because she owns all those summaries of faith which Christians all the world over were baptized into. Or if that be not enough, she owns all the holy scriptures, which she makes the rule of her faith ; and, lastly, she owns the four first general councils, which one of the popes did declare he received and embraced, as

he did the four Gospels; and in the last of which councils it is decreed, that nothing should ever be added to that creed, or that faith, that was published at the council of Nice.

She knows she is not a schismatical church, because she is willing and desirous to hold communion with all the churches in the world upon catholic terms, such terms as the ancient churches observed among themselves. And if some churches now will not admit her to their communion, but will impose terms which the ancient churches never knew, she is sorry for this, but cannot help it, the fault lies at their doors, not at hers. And as to the points in dispute between her and the church of Rome, she hath never declined any fair trial which of the churches hath right and truth on their side; let but the church of Rome wave her groundless, unaccountable infallibility, which they have neither scripture nor any general council to give countenance to, and put the trial of the controversy between them upon holy scripture, as it is interpreted by the primitive fathers, and she will at any time join issue with her. This now being the concession of the church of England, who can doubt of the sincerity of her reformation, or what should hinder to make her abundantly certain that she is a true church, though she does not pretend to be infallible?

#### QUESTION VIII.

*What way the church of England hath to determine controversies betwixt her and the dissenters besides the penal laws?*

#### ANSWER.

The same way we have to determine controversies betwixt us and the papists, if the penal laws



against them were taken away; of which I have already given an account.

## QUESTION IX.

*Give me a demonstration that the church of England is the church; such a one as no other heretic can make use of for his sect.*

## ANSWER.

For God's sake, sir, have a care how you talk of giving demonstrations; for I am sure your cause will not bear it. Do but you give me a demonstration that St. Peter was by Christ's appointment made head of the apostles, or that the bishop of Rome doth succeed St. Peter in that headship, and I will turn Roman catholic immediately. Nay, which is less, do but give me a demonstration that he is a lawful, canonical pope who now possesses St. Peter's chair, or that there has been such a pope for many years; or that any man whom you shall name is a true bishop, according to your own laws and canons; or that any priest you shall pitch upon is a true priest; or that you have in any church of your communion the true sacraments administered among you; and I do promise again, upon that condition, to be of your communion. But you know as well as I, that I promise nothing in saying this; for, according to the nature of the thing, and proceedings upon the laws of your church, it is impossible that any of these things should be demonstrated. And why therefore will you put me to give a demonstration that the church of England is *the church*; and such a demonstration too as no other heretic can make use of for his sect? But something I will say in answer to your demand.

And, first of all, you do not put it rightly. You

would have me give you a demonstration that the church of England is the true church. Why, sir, the church of England never pretended to be the church, in opposition to all other churches; though that was the pretence of the Donatists of old, and that is the pretence of your church now, and therefore you are apt to think that other churches do the same. All that we pretend to is, that we are a sound church, a true part of the catholic church, and that our communion is much safer than yours: and this we will join issue with you upon at any time.

Well, but you will say, instead of a demonstration give me a proof that the church of England is a true church; and, withal, such a proof as no other heretic can make use of for his sect. This is, indeed, the meaning of your question; I will charitably suppose it is your meaning, because it is the best meaning: and I thus answer to it. As for proof that the church of England is a true, sound part of the catholic church, I have, in good part, given it already: and I repeat it again, and add this, That the church of England retains the catholic faith according to all the ancient creeds; she can be convicted of no error condemned by the ancient churches; she owns all the ancient canon of scripture; she hath the same sacraments and the same priesthood that the ancient church had; and if you can deny such a church as this to be a sound part of the catholic, I pray try your skill in making out your denial.

This is the answer to the former part of your question. But then, you desire, further, such a proof of the church of England being a true, sound

church, as no other heretics can make use of for their sect. Why, to this I also answer, that if any of those whom you call heretics can really and truly say the same things for their church that we do say for ours, we shall never think them heretics, whatever you may account them; but shall always esteem them true members of the catholic church. But then, we always make a difference between those who only pretend to scripture and primitive records for their doctrines, and those who are able to make those pretences good. I grant that several sects do plead both those things as well as we; but their plea is to be examined before it be allowed. If their way be agreeable to the faith once delivered to the saints, it is to be approved; if not, it is to be reproved. And what we say as to them, we say as to you; for you have no other proof in the world that you are so much as a true part of the church of Christ, but that you hold the same faith and use the same worship that was taught by Christ and his apostles: and so far as you retain that faith and worship, we allow you so far to be a true church; but wherein soever you depart from it, so far it is the duty of every church to depart from you. As for the privilege of infallibility, which you only of all other Christians in the world do assume to yourselves, and from hence draw an argument to unwary people, that because nobody pretends to it but yourselves, therefore it must certainly be lodged in your church; it is so wholly devoid of all proof, nay, of all colour of proof, either from scripture or councils or ancient fathers; and, in truth, looks so like the bills that are pasted by empirics upon every wall for the curing all diseases and resolving all questions, that

it seems not worth the while to spend time in exposing it.

QUESTION X.

*Shew me, ever before the reign of king Henry the Eighth, any communion or society that held all and no other tenets than the church of England doth hold?*

ANSWER.

Commend me to this for a special demand. But as I have been so long upon the other questions that I am quite tired, I shall make bold to give this and the other that follow a very quick despatch.

The answer I give to this is by making another demand, which is every whit as good and as proper as this. Shew me, before the time of the council of Trent, any communion or society, nay, (which is more than is put in the demand,) shew me but any one man who held all and no other tenets than the church of Rome since that council doth hold; I say, shew me but this, and I promise I will recant. And this, I think, is a little more than is put in the demand: but it is an easy thing to ask questions or make demands.

QUESTION XI.

*May not a popish king be the supreme head of the church of England in spiritual matters?*

ANSWER.

What is designed by this question I know not; but I freely give a fair answer to it. Every sovereign prince, whether popish or protestant, is, by the law of nature and the law of God, in his own dominions, supreme head of the church, in that sense of headship which the church of England ascribes to the king, namely, that under Christ he

is supreme governor of all persons, and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil.

## QUESTION XII.

*What certain rule hath the church of England for the true interpretation of the scripture?*

## ANSWER.

I expected this question long before, for I hardly ever saw any popish queries but this was one of them. And in answer to it I tell the proposer what he may meet with over and over again, both in the writings of the fathers and in the protestant writers; and that is, that our rule of interpreting is the same rule that all the world hath; (except those who are possessed with infallibility;) viz. to consider the texts of scripture very well, and how they relate to what goes before and what follows after, and to compare one text of scripture with another, especially the obscure texts with the plainer; and to examine likewise what was the sense of the best ancient Christians about any text we consult: (for, whatever the proposer thinks, we pay as great a deference to the ancient writers of the church as any of them do, and perhaps a great deal more.)

This is the rule by which the church of England interprets the scripture; and I desire any of the church of Rome to shew a better. If they will say that our rule is not a certain rule; I answer, It is as certain as the thing will bear, and is certain enough for all the purposes either of Christian life or of necessary Christian truths. For, as for those truths of scripture which are not necessary, we may be securely ignorant of them: so that we have certainly all the means of being rightly informed that they have, about the sense of scripture, except one



thing, and that is, the pretended infallibility of their church ; and yet this one thing, among all considering men, must go for nothing. For this I dare be bold to say, that the church of Rome hath never yet, by virtue of her infallibility, made any one single text of scripture clearer or plainer than it was before infallibility was pretended to. This I insist upon, and would be glad to have one instance to confute what I say ; for I love infallibility, if I could tell where to find it. I grant, the learned men of the church of Rome have done considerable service towards the explaining of the Bible : but that service they have done is not owing to the infallibility of their church, but to their own honest pains, industry, and study.

Thus I have gone over the gentleman's twelve queries : I beg his pardon that I have dwelt so long upon them. He has put me to some trouble which I did not expect ; I hope my turn comes next to propose some questions to him. If he desires it, I will get them ready for him ; and if he will answer as clearly and plainly as I have done, I shall desire to be better acquainted with him.

*An Answer to some popish Paper put into the  
Hands of one of his Parishioners.*

Sent as an antidote to the gentleman who had received it.

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**I** CANNOT but say, that whoever wrote this paper looked upon the person he gave it to as a very shallow man, and easy to be imposed upon ; otherwise he would have been ashamed, for his own credit-sake, to have let such sophistries pass under his hand, as are here offered : for this is the bottom of his argument :

Because the church of Rome, in former times, was one of those churches that had a lawful succession from the apostles ; therefore that church, if it have not since erred, is still the true church.

The trick that he would here put upon the reader lies in these last words, *is still the true church*. If he had said, *a true church*, he knows we would readily have agreed to his proposition. But that was not at all to his purpose, because it would not serve his cause ; for there have always been, and yet are, several true churches in the world, besides the Roman. But now drawing his conclusion thus, that the church of Rome is the true church, he would have it believed, that she is the true church, in opposition to all other churches and communions. In a word, that the Roman is the one catholic church of Christ, out of which salvation cannot be had. This, I say, must be his meaning, if he would make any proselytes by this argument.

But now taking this to be his meaning, what a

palpable shame is here put upon his reader: the church of Rome had a lawful succession from the apostles, therefore it is still the only true catholic church. Whereas, for all its succession from the apostles, it could be no more than a part of the catholic church, which was all that the other apostolical churches, as Jerusalem, and Antioch, &c. pretended to claim from that succession: not to be each of them the only true catholic church. So that when he says the church of Rome is still *the true church*, he puts upon us in his conclusion things that were not in his premises. Could he prove to us, that the church of Rome was ever the true church, in the sense he intends it, viz. the one universal church of Christ, out of which is no salvation, we might allow she is still so. But this we know he can never prove, and we believe he is so wise as not to offer at it.

What I have now said is a full answer to all the argument that is in the paper, though we should meddle no further with it. For, whether we can or cannot answer what follows, I am sure his reason, by which he would persuade you to become a convert to their church, is shewed to be no reason, because it proceeds upon this false supposition, that the church of Rome was once the catholic church, which it never was: but now being, as he thinks, secure of that, and supposing that you will readily grant that if the church of Rome hath never erred, it is still the catholic church, he proceeds to shew that the church of Rome hath never erred: and he useth an admirable argument for it. No church, says he, can err but in three points, viz. schism, heresy, or apostasy. Which, methinks, is just such

a proposition as this ; No man can be sick, unless he contract his disease by surfeiting, by catching cold, or by some contagion. For can any man, in good earnest, believe that no church can err, unless at the same time she be guilty either of heresy or schism or apostasy ? Pray, what shall we think of the churches of Asia in pope Victor's time, who differed from the western churches about the celebration of Easter ; and where the difference ran so high, that the pope proceeded to excommunicate them upon that account ? What shall we think of the African churches in St. Cyprian's time, who were for rebaptizing of heretics against the sense of the Roman church ? Will this gentleman say that they were guilty either of heresy or schism or apostasy ? I doubt not but he will say they erred ; but I believe he would be loath to charge them with any of these three crimes, because, if he doth, he will make some of the best men in those ages, and who are now owned as saints by the church of Rome, to be either heretics or schismatics or apostates.

But suppose we should tell him that the church of Rome hath erred some of those three ways which he assigns to be the only instances in which a church can err ; I am sure he will sooner tax us for our liberty of censuring, than be able to answer our arguments. Suppose we say that the church of Rome is guilty of schism, and that notoriously, I do not know what he will answer to it ; for schism is nothing else but a breach of catholic communion, and where there is any such breach, the schism lies at their doors who are the causes of it. This is acknowledged by all who know any thing of divinity. But now, in this sad, divided state of Christendom, where

there are so many schisms and separations, who are so much to be blamed as the church of Rome; who being only upon the same level with other churches, and sister to them, has by an unheard-of usurpation made herself mother and mistress of all other churches, and excluded all Christians, who will not own her as such, out of her communion? If this be not schism, if this be not a breach of catholic communion, I know not what is.

As for the second point, wherein he says a church is capable of erring, viz. heresy; though they do liberally upon all occasions impute that crime to us, and scruple not to call us damnable heretics, yet, if it should come to a fair trial, we shall be able to make it appear, that they much rather deserve that name, even according to the definition of heresy that is given by themselves. If heresy be an error in faith obstinately maintained, as I think that is the common definition that passeth among them, I do not doubt but we can shew a great many such errors so maintained in their church. If they add to this definition such errors as are maintained against the sense of the church, why, upon these terms we will join issue with them, and are ready to prove that the present church of Rome doth maintain errors against the sense of the scriptures and the primitive apostolic churches, which in all reason ought to be the measure and standard by which the truth of the doctrines is to be tried. And, lastly, if it be heresy to innovate in the Christian faith, and to make new articles of religion necessary to salvation, which Christ and his apostles never thought of; (as for my part I think this is as truly heresy as any other thing whatsoever;) in this respect



we do not doubt to say, that the church of Rome is the most heretical church in the world; because, whereas all other Christian churches that we know of are contented with the ancient creeds, she hath added to the creed as many more articles, and made the belief of those new ones which she had added, as necessary to salvation as the belief of the ancient ones.

And then as to the third instance he gives of the church's error, viz. by the way of apostasy, this we are unwilling to charge the church of Rome with, for we could not call her by the name of a church if we believed she was guilty of it. Apostasy (as that word is commonly used) is a departure from the Christian faith. But we own the church of Rome doth still hold the foundation of faith, though upon that foundation she has built many errors. But if by apostasy be meant a departure from any of Christ's doctrines that are not absolutely necessary to salvation, in this sense we do not doubt but the present church of Rome hath apostatized: that is to say, she doth in several instances teach quite otherwise than Christ and his apostles taught.

The gentleman having told you that the church cannot err but in these three points, puts these questions to you; When, where, and how the church erred? Who found out the error? What assembly, and by whose power gathered together? Though he puts all these questions concerning the church in general, yet we suppose he hereby means all along the church of Rome, otherwise he speaks nothing to the purpose.

Now it is a sufficient answer to say, that if we can prove that the church of Rome hath actually

erred, it is not a farthing matter whether we give an answer to these questions or no; because they are altogether impertinent. They are just as much to the purpose, as if a man who is really out of order in point of health, or lies languishing under a distemper, should endeavour to persuade his friends, or those that stand by him, that he is in perfect health, and ails nothing, by this argument: If I be sick, it concerns you to shew me when, and where, and how I got this sickness: who first found it out: what consultations of physicians discovered it; and if it was a consult of physicians, pray by whose order were they sent for? Would not this be a ridiculous argument to the by-standers? And yet just such is this argument, by which this gentleman would persuade you that his church was never diseased with any error.

It is sufficient to satisfy any indifferent person that the church of Rome has been guilty of great errors, when it is visible and apparent that she has departed from the holy scriptures, both in doctrine and practice, in abundance of instances, though it cannot be shewed you when, and where, and how that church took up these errors, or who first found them out; though even as to these things we are not so at a loss but that we could give a particular answer, if it was fit to enter upon the particulars. We can tell you the particular things wherein the church of Rome hath departed from the doctrine of Christ and his apostles: and we give you these, for instance; half communion, honour given to images, adoration of the host, invocation of saints, and service in an unknown tongue: these are all matters of practice contrary to the tenor of the scriptures.

And as for doctrines, we can name several instances which they have made necessary articles of faith, which have no countenance from scripture, but are much against it; as the doctrines about penance, and transubstantiation, and purgatory, and indulgences, and the pope's supremacy.

We can tell you likewise when these doctrines began to prevail in the church of Rome; not that they all sprung up at once, but by degrees, and in several ages. But those ages we can name: and we can likewise tell who chiefly promoted them, and for what end; and who opposed them.

Lastly; we can likewise give you a reasonable account of our own reformation here in England, and satisfy every indifferent person that it is made by just and sufficient authority, forasmuch as every national church hath power and authority in itself to reform itself, according to the laws of God, and the principles and practice of the primitive church, without consulting the pope, or any commissioned by him. And this reformation of ours was duly and regularly carried on, having the concurrence both of the princes and of all the estates of the realm, viz. clergy, nobility, and laity, which is abundantly sufficient to justify our proceedings. Though yet, had there been none of these things, so great and dangerous were the corruptions of the church of Rome, that even any private man, who was convinced of them, was in duty bound to abstain from the communion of that church, so long as she imposed those things as necessary terms of her communion.

*Advice to Protestants of ordinary Capacities how  
to behave themselves when they are tampered  
with to change their Religion.*

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THE first thing they will usually tell you is, that it concerns you infinitely to look that you be of the true church; for you are damned if you be not, because there is but one faith, one baptism, one church.

To this you must answer, that you do believe and profess that one faith which was delivered by Christ and his apostles, and that you are baptized into that faith, and consequently you are a member of Christ's holy catholic church.

They will tell you, that you are not a member of Christ's catholic church, because you are not a Roman catholic.

To this you must answer, that you are a member of the catholic church, though you be not a member of the Roman church; for the Roman church is but a part of the catholic church.

They will tell you, that the Roman church hath all the marks of the catholic church, and no other church but that hath.

You may tell them again, that no one particular church can have all the marks of the catholic; no more than a particular county of England, as for instance, Middlesex, can have the marks of being all England; for the catholic church doth take into its notion all the churches of Christ throughout the

world; but the Roman church, with all those particular churches that join in communion with it, makes but a small part of those churches. So that all that can be gathered from her marks is, that she is one part of the church of Christ; but she wants all those marks that should either shew her to be the whole church, or a sound part of the church; for certainly, among the marks of a true and sound church, this ought to be put in as one of the principal; That the church, which professeth so to be, should, in matters of faith, hold a conformity with the holy scriptures and the primitive writings: but this the church of Rome doth not at this day.

They will tell you, that the church of Rome is in all things conformable to the holy scriptures and to the primitive church.

You may safely answer them, that, in a great many things, the church of Rome hath defined, and practiseth at this day contrary to the scriptures, or the usage of the primitive church: as, for instance, in denying the cup of the holy communion to the laity; in celebrating the communion every day, when none of the company but the priest doth receive; in having their prayers in an unknown tongue; in a religious use of images in the worship of God; in several doctrines which they have made matters of faith; as the doctrine of indulgences, purgatory, seven sacraments, transubstantiation, invocation of saints, and the like. As to all these things, you may safely challenge them that there is nothing to be shewn in the holy scriptures, or in primitive antiquity, for the belief or practice of them, but much to be shewn against them.

They will ask you, who is to be judge of the



meaning of scripture? Is every private man to be judge of that? At that rate we shall have as many faiths as there are men.

To this you may answer, you refuse no judges of the sense of scripture, supposing they be equally indifferent ones; but you think it a little unreasonable that the church of Rome should be a judge of the sense of scripture in matters wherein she is a party; that you are willing to be concluded by the judgment of the universal church as to the sense of any texts of scripture that are in debate between the church of England and the Roman; and you will at any time join issue with them upon that point, provided you may have liberty to call in one to your assistance who is used to those matters. But you may answer, further; every man is a judge of the sense of scripture, supposing it be rightly translated, in needful matters; and as to those scriptures that are not necessary, it is no great matter if you do not understand them.

If they say that in necessary matters the scriptures are not sufficiently plain,

Then pray ask them, how it comes about that God should not be able, by the penmen he made use of, to put his mind plainly into writing; as well as Tully, Aristotle, or Virgil, put their minds into writing? We can, at this day, understand the sense of those authors as to most of the things they write about, though about some passages there is a controversy: and why may we not as well understand the sense of those writings that were dictated by God Almighty?

When they press you to take the scriptures only in their interpretation, you must ask them, why

they would have you believe their interpretation? I suppose they will answer, because their interpretation is the sense of the church, which cannot err.

If you ask them again, how they prove that the church cannot err? it is likely they will tell you, that Christ hath promised to be with the church to the end of the world; and, if so, how is it possible the church should fall into errors about faith?

To this you may answer, that Christ hath indeed promised that he will be with the apostles; and you are likewise willing to grant that this promise is to be extended to all those who succeed the apostles, to the end of the world. But what is this to infallibility? May not Christ's spirit be present with Christian ministers, unless at the same time you suppose he confers upon them the privilege of infallibility? But if this text do indeed make any thing towards infallibility, it will rather prove the infallibility of particular ministers than particular churches. But how, from this text, the church of Rome, above all others, should derive to herself a privilege of being infallible, is beyond all reason, and almost beyond all imagination.

They will ask you where was your church before Luther. You may tell them your church was there to be found where their church never was, viz. in the holy scriptures, and the records of the ancient fathers and councils. If they cavil at this answer, you may answer directly to their question, in this manner: you may tell them, that the church of England, before Luther, was just in the same place where it is now; for the protestants did not pretend to make a new church, but only to reform the old one. The church of England, before that time, em-

braced a great many errors in matters of religion, and built a great deal of hay and stubble upon the foundation : but after that time, through the mercy of God, she was purged from those errors, and threw aside that rubbish, which, by time, and too much compliance with the Roman church, she had contracted ; but still she was the same church she had been before, as much as a face that is washed is the same that it was before when it was dirty.

They will urge you to shew them any church, before the reformation, that held in matters of faith as the church of England now doth.

You may tell them, that all the ancient churches of Christ held the same faith the church of England now holds ; and if in the Articles, and other public monuments of our church, we have made declarations against several particulars, such as the pope's supremacy, &c. of which we find no mention in the primitive church, it is because there were none in those days who held those doctrines : but if they had been started, we do not in the least doubt but they would have been as much condemned by the ancient churches as they are by the church of England.

A  
SHORT ARGUMENT

AGAINST

THE DOCTRINE OF INFALLIBILITY,

AS IT IS COMMONLY PRETENDED TO BE PROVED BY THE  
ROMAN CATHOLICS.

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**H**OW will you prove to a protestant, that the church is infallible? If you say that we have the church's tradition for it, you say no more than this, that the church hath always taught, and doth now teach, that she is infallible. But then the question returns: How shall we know that the church is not mistaken in what she so teacheth?

If you say that the holy scripture (which among all Christians is acknowledged to be of divine authority) doth teach that the church, in all ages, is and must be infallible; we ask again, How can we be certain that the scripture teacheth so, since we do not find that any text of scripture hath such a meaning?

If, in answer to this, you tell us that the church, to whom only it belongs to interpret scripture, doth declare that this is the sense of scripture, you have said no more than you did before; for all that you say is this; that therefore we are to believe that Christ in scripture hath promised infallibility to his church, because the church saith he did: so that still we must take the church's own word for her own infallibility.

If you go another way to work to untie this knot, and say that the scriptures are sufficiently plain in themselves to all unprejudiced persons about this point of infallibility, especially as they are backed with the constant tradition of the church in all ages, we will acknowledge your answer to be reasonable ; but we will join issue with you upon this point, and will put the issue upon these two questions :

1. Where can you produce one text of scripture that doth either directly, or by consequence, necessarily infer that the church of Christ, in all ages, shall be secure from error in all doctrines that she teacheth ?

2. Among several texts of scripture which you urge for the proof of the church's infallibility, where can you name so much as one that hath always had the tradition of the church to make that sense of it which is now given by your Roman patrons of infallibility ?

Do but produce one text that maketh for you either of these ways, and you will do something towards your cause. But in the mean time, while you are a doing this, give me leave to remind you, that in putting the issue of the controversy upon this point, we have gained a point or two from you, which when you come to talk to any purpose of your doctrine of infallibility, the protestants will take notice of, and you must own.

First of all, that all the certainty of that doctrine rests upon the authority of the scripture only.

2. That every man, before he can be rationally satisfied about the truth of that doctrine, must judge for himself about the sense of the scripture, though he is to take in all the helps for the interpreting of



it (the chief of which is tradition) that he can come by.

And therefore, thirdly, he must be allowed to examine all texts, and compare them one with another, making use still of the best assistances he can get for this purpose, because otherwise he can make no true judgment.

And therefore, fourthly, if he cannot satisfy himself, he must be allowed to examine all the particular doctrines that are taught in the church where he lives, and to judge of their agreement or disagreement with the scripture. For if any one doctrine taught by the church be repugnant to the holy scripture, it is certain that the church which teacheth that doctrine cannot be infallible.

I do not say that it is necessary for every man, in order to his satisfaction, to run through all this method; but I say, even according to the most plausible methods that the church of Rome can defend herself by, she must allow of this method: from which I make three inferences.

1. That the scriptures, when all is done, are the rule of our faith.

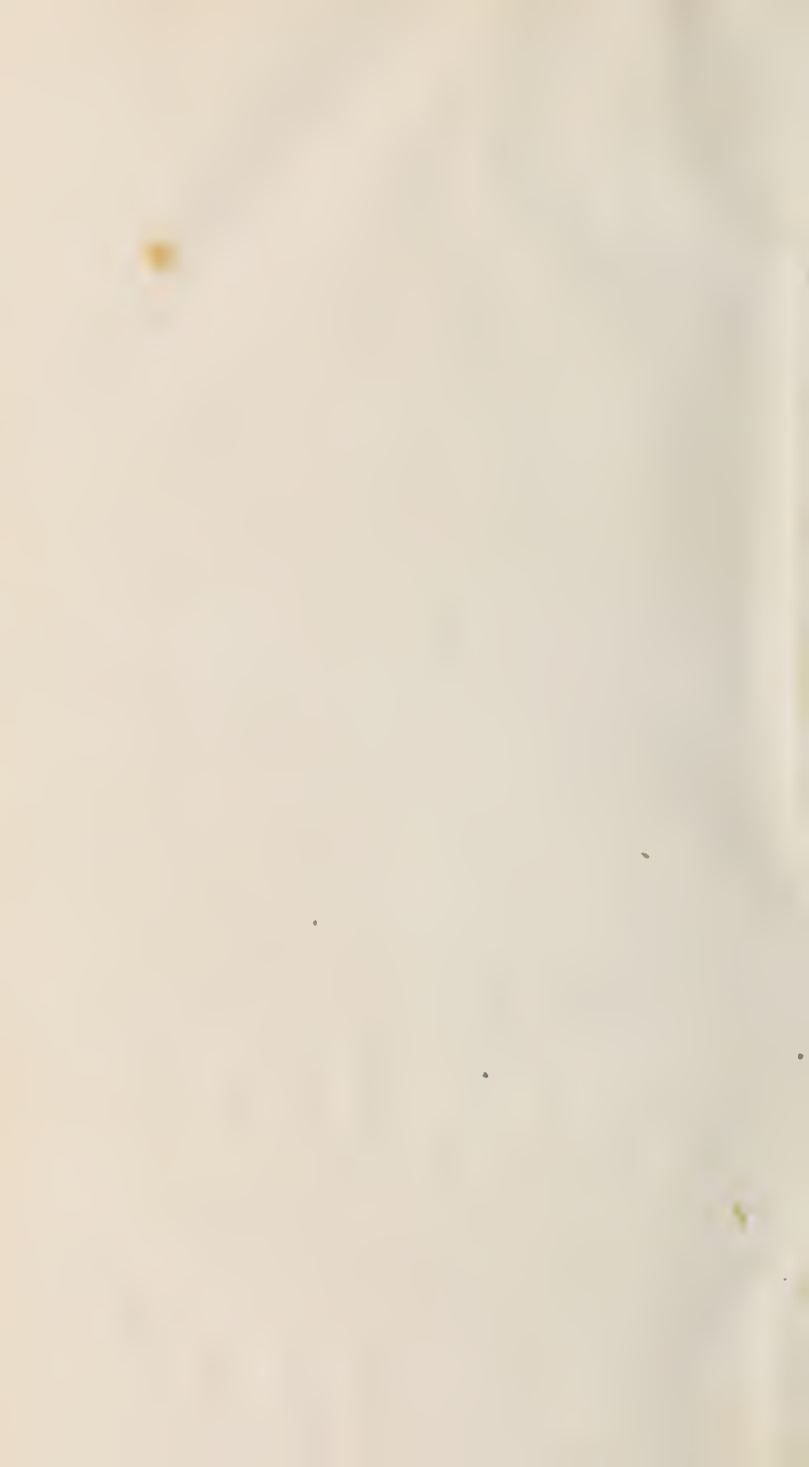
2. That every one ought to have liberty allowed him to examine the scriptures.

3. And, that every one, before he can conclude that the church is infallible, should be allowed to examine all the particular doctrines of that church; and not to run away with a general notion that such a church is infallible, and therefore all she teacheth is true.

THE END.











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